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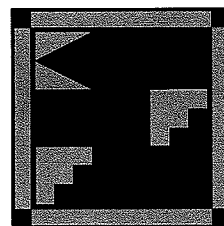
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Fountain/Warren County Child Care Needs Assessment

September 1999



C E N T E R
for
F A M I L I E S
at
P U R D U E
U N I V E R S I T Y

This report was written by:
Gail Johnston Ulmer, Ph.D.
Ting Liu, MS
James Elicker, Ph.D.

The Center for Families at Purdue University

Sponsored by the
Fountain County
Step Ahead Council

Strengthening services to families with research, education, and outreach

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Preface

In mid 1998, Teresa Ramey, Coordinator of the Fountain County Step Ahead Council approached the Center for Families at Purdue University for assistance in conducting a county-wide child care needs assessment. The Step Ahead Council wanted to determine the child care needs of Fountain and also Warren County for strategic planning efforts.

The Center for Families contacted Dr. Gail Johnston Ulmer, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center. She agreed to oversee the project with the assistance of a graduate student, Ting Liu. The needs assessment is based on a model developed by Dr. James Elicker, Associate Professor of Child Development and Family Studies, and his research team.

After some initial discussions with Teresa Ramey, Dr. Ulmer and Ting Liu met with the Fountain County Step Ahead Council in January 1999. Collection of needs assessment data began in February 1999 and ended in early July. Data gathering methods included a review of existing data, phone interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus group interviews.

This report is the result of efforts by the Purdue research team, Step Ahead Council members, and many community members. The child care needs we identify and our recommendations will provide a basis for discussion and planning of more effective child care support and services in both Fountain and Warren Counties. These services will benefit children, families, employers, and communities throughout the counties.

Acknowledgements

This child care needs assessment could not have been completed without the support of members of the Fountain County Step Ahead Council. Their suggestions during meetings were very helpful. Teresa Ramey, Step Ahead Coordinator and several Council members provided feedback on a draft of the parent survey. In addition, many Council members completed individual resource forms during the initial planning stages of the needs assessment. Finally, some members of the Council participated in phone interviews as community professionals.

The researchers would like to thank the following persons for helping to coordinate focus group interviews:

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Cynthia Ricketts, Head Start
Cindy Mason, Division of Families and Children
Laura Zimmerman, Warren County Licensing Consultant
Tammy Reynolds, Division of Families and Children
Sally Gritten and Melody Rogers, WIC

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Roy Stroud, Metropolitan School District of Warren County
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Janet Cook, Steel Grip, Inc.
Dave, Steel Grip Safety Apparel Co.
Sandy Dreher, Tru-Flex Metal Hose Corp.
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County Care
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Executive Summary

The Needs Assessment Study

The purpose of the 1999 Fountain/Warren County Child Care Needs Assessment Study, conducted by the Purdue University Center for Families, was to provide information useful for planning child care services in both Fountain and Warren Counties in the next 5 years. This information includes:

- Current supply and demand for child care
- Types of child care preferred
- Types of child care needed but not available
- Common child care problems and their impact on families
- Adequacy of resources for child care providers, and
- Recommendations for meeting child care needs in the next 5 years.

The needs assessment was conducted using: 1) existing information relevant to child care needs; 2) phone interviews with community professionals; 3) focus group interviews with parents and child care providers; and 4) parent child care survey questionnaires.

Findings

Supply and Demand for Child Care

1. The demand for child care in Fountain County is expected to remain stable or increase in the next 5 years.
2. The demand for child care in Warren County is expected to remain stable or decline in the next 5 years.
3. Both licensed home providers and community professionals overwhelmingly agree that there is a shortage of quality child care in Fountain and Warren Counties.
4. There is a limited supply of licensed child care in both Fountain and Warren Counties. There are no child care centers in Fountain County.

Types of Care Needed But Not Available

1. Lack of care for children when they are sick was the most common problem identified by parents surveyed. Currently, there is no licensed sick care in either county. Sick care is particularly a problem for Warren County families.
2. Other types of child care in Fountain and Warren County are in short supply, including: Infant/toddler, afternoon (2nd shift), and night (3rd shift) care.
3. Parents would like a 24-hour child care center in Fountain County.

Types of Child Care Preferred

1. Many Fountain and Warren County families currently use a babysitter or unlicensed child care home but would prefer to use a different form of child care.
2. Fountain County parents would prefer to use either family members for their child care, or a licensed child care home or center.
3. Warren County parents also would prefer to either care for their children at home, use relative care, or use licensed home care.

Child Care Problems and Their Impact on Families

1. Many parents are unaware of the types of child care available to them. They do not know how to locate care for their children.
2. Many Fountain and Warren County parents are forced to miss work or school due to child care problems.
3. Parents have trouble finding 2nd and 3rd shift care. Professionals identified 2nd shift care as the bigger need.

Resources for Child Care Providers

1. Child care providers would like more opportunities to network with other providers.
2. More training opportunities in the evening or on weekends are needed for child care providers.

3. Better distribution of educational and other grant opportunity materials are also needed for child care providers.

Recommendations for Action

Increase the Supply of Quality Child Care

1. Increase the number of licensed child care slots available for infants and toddlers in both Fountain and Warren Counties. Provide incentives for providers to take more infants. Incentives could include special training, equipment grants, supplements to reimbursements or fees, and regular relief/substitute care.
2. Increase the number of slots for afternoon (2nd shift) care and night (3rd shift) care in both counties. Working through existing providers and providing incentives may be the most effective way to do this.
3. Establish a child care center in Fountain County. Locate the center in Attica or Veedersburg, which are both close to both Harrison Steel and MasterGuard. Form a coalition of family friendly businesses to collaborate on this project.
4. Develop a plan to provide sick care in the county.
 - a. Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room at a new child care center (Recommendation #3). A provider network (Recommendation #7 below) may be a good place to identify providers interested in providing sick care.
 - b. Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room for children. Assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care, how much they would be willing to pay, and staffing options.
5. Encourage local school corporations to provide after school care.

Support Child Care Providers and Increase Quality

6. Continue to encourage experienced child care providers to take advantage of training opportunities and to seek licensing. Coordinate training sessions at convenient times for providers. Advertise the Council's activities and the importance of licensing to all providers.

7. Set up a monthly support group for child care providers. Encourage unlicensed providers as well as licensed providers to attend. This group would allow providers to network and also would provide a good forum to distribute grants and other training information.
8. Educate parents about the costs of quality child care and the importance of seeking quality care. Develop a public education campaign that includes information about how to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for quality child care, and the importance of seeking a licensed provider.

Support Families Needing Child Care

9. Work with local employers to educate them about the child care needs of their employees. Organize a seminar for local business representatives or a public education campaign aimed at employers to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Find a way, possibly through a newsletter, to publicly recognize businesses who take steps to implement "family-friendly" policies. Encourage employers to use the "Indiana Tool-Kit for Employers and Community Planners" developed by the Center For Families at Purdue University to assess the child care needs of their employees.

Overview of the Needs Assessment Study

The Fountain County Step Ahead Council approached the Center for Families at Purdue University in September 1998 about conducting a child care needs assessment in both Fountain and Warren Counties. The Center for Families contacted Dr. Gail Johnston Ulmer, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for Families. Dr. Ulmer worked with Teresa Ramey, the Fountain and Warren County Step Ahead Coordinator in developing a plan for the needs assessment. The needs assessment is modeled after a 1998 needs assessment done in Clinton County by Dr. James Elicker and his research team. The model was modified to meet the needs of Fountain and Warren Counties. The needs assessment took place between January 1999 and July 1999. Preliminary results were presented to the Step Ahead Council in June 1999. The final results will be presented in September 1999.

The needs assessment conducted by Purdue University used the following methods of data collection: 1) examination of existing data; 2) phone interviews with key community professionals; 3) focus group interviews with parents and child care providers; and 4) child care parent survey questionnaires.

The research questions were:

1. What is the current and projected demand for child care services in Fountain and Warren Counties? What is the current child care supply?
2. What types of child care services are needed but not available?
3. What types of child care do families in Fountain and Warren Counties prefer?
4. What are the most common child care problems experienced by Fountain and Warren County families? How do these problems affect families?
5. What resources are available to Fountain and Warren County child care providers to help them offer quality care? Are the resources adequate, or are there unmet provider needs?
6. What are recommendations for meeting the child care needs of Fountain and Warren County in the next five years?

Review of Existing Data

Existing county data relevant to the needs assessment was gathered and examined prior to collecting the new child care data. The existing information came from the U.S. Census, Internet resources, the SIFT Profiles (Status of Indiana Families), and other sources. Population trends such as birth trends, and school enrollment are examined along with employment, and child care supply and demand.

Fountain and Warren Counties are both rural counties in Western Indiana. Fountain County is larger with a population of 18,235 in 1997. Of the 18,235 persons, 1,183 were under age 5¹. In contrast, Warren County had a population of 8,170 in 1997 with 555 persons under age 5. The largest employer in Fountain County is MasterGuard, with approximately 1800 employees. Overall 24.9 percent of the county's employed population works in manufacturing. The primary employer in Warren County is the Metropolitan School District with approximately 200 employees. Once again, the largest proportion of the county's employed population is employed in the manufacturing industry (21.2 percent). Both counties had unemployment rates that fell faster than the state average between 1992 and 1997. The Fountain County unemployment rate was 4.7% in 1997, while Warren County's rate was 3.2% in the same year². The overall poverty rate for Fountain County was 9.8% in 1993.³ The child poverty rate was 14.8% in the same year (children under 18). This rate was lower than the state child poverty rate (17.3%). The overall poverty rate for Warren County was 9.6% in 1993 with a child poverty rate of 12.6%.⁴ Finally, the median household income for all households was \$29,373 in 1993 for Fountain County and \$31,407 for Warren County (\$31,055 for the state).⁵

Population Trends and Projections

Fountain County had an estimated total population of 18,235 in 1997. This represents a 2.4% increase in the county's population since 1990 (1990 population = 17,808). The state population grew by 5.8% during the same time period.⁶ Also in 1997 Fountain County had 1,183 children under age 5, 1,229 children between ages 5 and 9, and 1,280 children between ages 10-14. According to published projections, Fountain County's population is predicted to increase steadily over the next 5 years.⁷

Warren County had a total population of 8,170 in 1997 (estimated). The county is the 3rd smallest in the state by population size. Between 1990 and 1997

¹ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

² *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

³ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

⁴ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

⁵ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

⁶ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

⁷ *Population Projections of Indiana Counties: 2000 to 2020*, Indiana Business Research Center, 1998.

the Warren County population declined by 0.1% (or by 6 persons). When broken down by age, the county had 555 children under age 5, 524 between ages 5 and 9, and 596 children ages 10-14. Warren County's population is projected to have a small increase in the next 5 years. Population trends will impact the future child care needs of both counties. Trends for births, school enrollment, and recent population projections are examined below

Birth Trends

Fountain County had 231 births in 1997.⁸ This represents a birth rate of 12.7 births for every 1000 persons in the county. The Indiana birth rate was 14.2 in 1997. The Fountain County birth trends show a small decline in the actual number of births from 1992 to 1997 (2.7% decline or 13 fewer births in 1997). *Figure 1* contains the number of births to Fountain County residents from 1992 to 1997. In the past 6 years Fountain County birth rates have declined slightly with small year to year fluctuations.

There were 96 births in Warren County in 1997, about half the births of Fountain County. Similar to Fountain County though, Warren County experienced a decline in the actual number of births in the county between 1992 and 1997 (4% decline or 8 fewer births in 1997). The births for Warren County residents are also listed in *Figure 1*. Warren County experienced an overall decline in number of births from 1992 to 1997 with some year to year fluctuations.

Public School Enrollment Trends

There are 3 school corporations in Fountain County: Attica Consolidated School Corporation, Covington Community School Corporation, and the Southeast Fountain School Corporation. For the 1998-99 school year Fountain County Schools had a combined enrollment of 3409 students. Of these students, the kindergarten through 3rd grade enrollment was 1109 students⁹, and the 4th through 8th grade enrollment was 1271 students. The largest school corporation in the county was the Southeast Fountain School Corporation located in Veedersburg (1,422 students with 490 students in K-3rd grade). The total projected enrollment for all schools in the 1999-2000 school year is 3481. This represents a 1.04% increase (72 students) in overall enrollment between the 98-99 and the 99-2000 school years. *Figure 2* contains K-3 school enrollment figures for all Fountain County Schools from the 1998-99 school year to the 2002-03 (projected) school year. These figures show that school enrollments will continue to increase over the next five years. Between

⁸ *Indiana Natality Report*, Indiana State Department of Health, 1997.

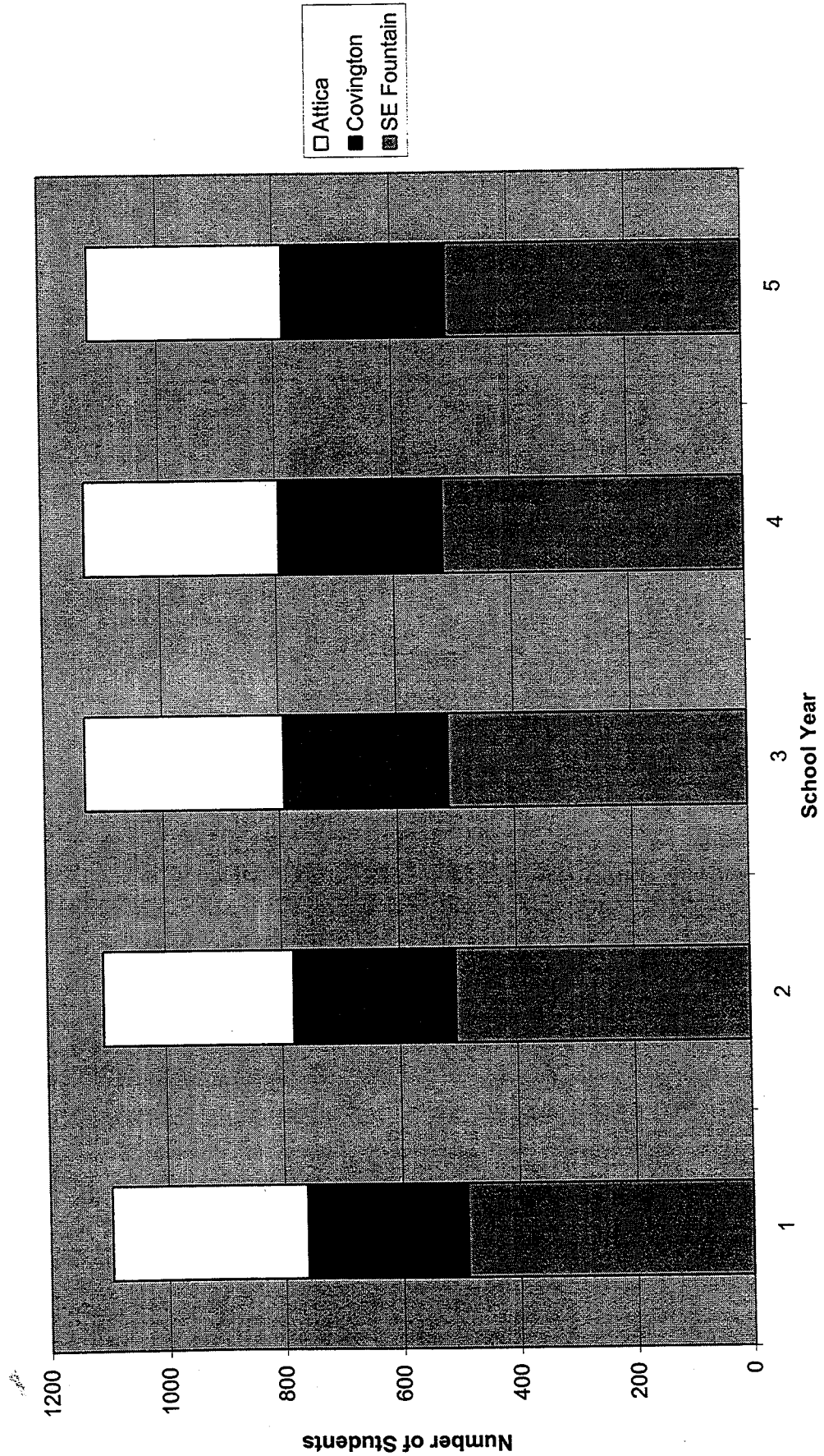
⁹ For the 1998-99 school year there were 14 students in Pre-kindergarten in the Attica Consolidated School Corporation. These students are included in the number of students from K-3rd grade.

Figure 1: Births by Year



Source: IN State Dept. of Health, Natality Tables.
and Kids Count in IN Data Book, Indiana Youth Institute, 1997.

Figure 2: K-3 School Enrollments for Fountain County



the 1998-99 school year and the 2002-03 school year the K-3 population in Fountain County is projected to increase by 22 students.

Warren County has one school corporation, the Metropolitan School District of Warren County. For the 1998-99 school year Warren County Schools had an overall enrollment of 1,359 students. Of these students, the kindergarten through 3rd grade enrollment was 438 students, and the 4th through 8th grade enrollment was 536 students. The projected enrollment for the Warren County Schools in the 1999-2000 school year is 1,373 students. This represents a very small increase in the overall student population (14 additional students). *Figure 3* contains the K-3 school enrollment figures for Warren County. Between the 1998-99 school year and the 2002-03 school year the K-3 population is projected to decline by 30 students.

Population Projections

Recent population projections have predicted a steady growth for the Fountain County population through the year 2020. According to the Indiana Business Research Center, Fountain County's population will reach 18,590 by 2000 and 18,925 by 2005. This represents a projected increase of 690 persons from 1997 to 2005 or a 1.9% increase in the population. The projected increase could indicate a small increase in the demand for child care in the next 5 to 6 years.

Similar to Fountain County, Warren County is also projected to have a steady population growth through 2020. The Warren County population is projected to reach 8477 people by 2005 and grow by 307 persons or 1.8% between 1997 and 2005. Based on the projected increase in population Warren County may also have a slight increase in its demand for child care in the next few years.

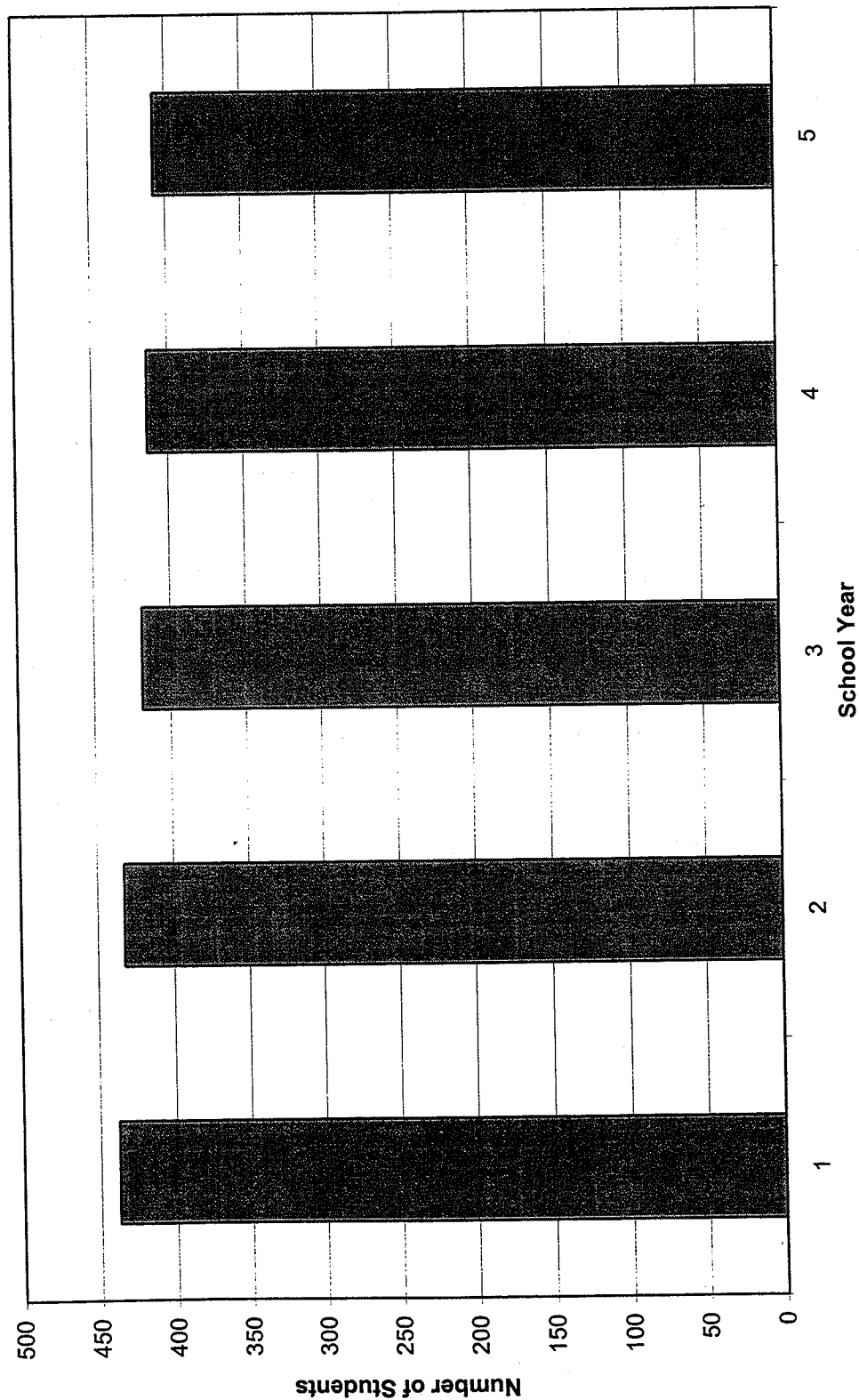
Employment

Fountain County had a 4.7% unemployment rate in 1997. This is slightly larger than the state average (3.5%) but considerably lower than the county unemployment rate in 1992 (9.6%). In 1997 there were 410 unemployed persons in Fountain County. About one quarter of employed adults are employed in manufacturing industries (24.9% in 1997). The major industry in the county is manufacturing (1,866 workers in 1996), followed by retail trade (1,391 in 1996), and services (1,369 employed in 1996).¹⁰

Warren County had a lower unemployment rate than Fountain County at 3.2%. This is lower than the state average and also about half the county rate in 1992 (7.0%). In 1997 there were 125 unemployed residents of Warren County. Similar to Fountain County, many employed adults are employed in manufacturing

¹⁰Status of Indiana Families 1999: *Living Poor in Indiana*.

**Figure 3: K-3 School Enrollments for Warren County:
Metropolitan School District**



industries (630 persons or 21.2% of employed adults in 1996). The percentage in manufacturing is followed closely by employment in services (628 or 21.1%).¹¹

Previous studies

No child care needs assessments have been done in either Fountain or Warren County in the past few years. A child care survey was completed in 1998 by employees at MasterGuard, a Fountain County factory in Veedersburg. The survey was conducted by MasterGuard. Employees were asked to indicate which shift(s) they work, the ages of their children, and whether or not they would be interested in on site day care. Approximately 300 of MasterGuard's 1800 employees completed the survey. Enough interest was indicated that the company is exploring possibilities for a day care center near the factory.¹² A copy of the survey is included in *Appendix A*.

Child Care Supply and Demand

Currently there are no licensed child care centers in Fountain County, and one in Warren County (Williamsport Day School, Williamsport). The Williamsport Day School operates from 6am to 6pm and takes children from age one through grade school. The Center currently has slots for 93 children but is not full.¹³ There are 5 licensed home day care providers and 2 unlicensed home day care providers in Fountain County registered with Connexions Child Care Resource and Referral as of September 1999.¹⁴ According to information provided by Step Ahead, there are 10 home providers in Fountain County that are either licensed or in the process of becoming licensed as of October 1998.¹⁵ Many of these providers are the same ones registered with Connexions. There are also at least 34 unlicensed home care providers in Fountain County although the actual number is unknown.¹⁶ In Warren County there are 3 licensed providers registered with Connexions Child Care Resource and Referral. There are 6 home providers in Warren County that are either licensed or in the process of becoming licensed according to information provided by the Step Ahead Council. Warren County also has at least 19 unlicensed providers.¹⁷ The majority of children in Fountain and Warren Counties are cared for by their parents and/or relatives. In 1990 the Family and Social Services Administration estimated that only 12% of the children needing day care (children under age 6 with all parents working) in Fountain County and 4% in Warren

¹¹ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

¹² Interview with Rolf Samuelson, Human Resource Director, MasterGuard, March 30, 1999.

¹³ Phone interview with Williamsport Day School, September 13, 1999.

¹⁴ Phone interview with Connexions, September 13, 1999.

¹⁵ *Fountain County Service Provider Directory*, Step Ahead and First Steps.

¹⁶ Information provided by Teresa Ramey, Fountain County Step Ahead Coordinator.

¹⁷ Information provided by Teresa Ramey, Fountain County Step Ahead Coordinator.

were in licensed day care homes/centers.¹⁸ The Warren County estimate is probably low because the Williamsport Day School (center) was not included in the estimate.

There is one Head Start Center in Covington with 94 slots for children ages 3-5. The Head Start Center includes children from both Fountain and Warren Counties. There is currently a waiting list for the Head Start Center.¹⁹ Finally, there are 6 preschools in Fountain County and 3 in Warren County.²⁰

Conclusions

Fountain and Warren Counties are both rural counties in Northwestern Indiana. Based on population projections, birth trends, and school enrollment projections the population in Fountain County should increase at a slow but steady rate over the next five years. The overall population is projected to grow at a steady rate. School enrollments are predicted increase over the next five years. Birth trends in the past few years have shown small year to year deviations but a relatively stable birth rate during the 1990s. In addition, employment figures show low unemployment rates, which will support population growth. Based on the information gathered, Fountain County will experience a small growth in the overall demand for child care in the next few years.

In Warren County, the overall population is projected to increase at a small but steady rate over the next five years. School enrollments in the Metropolitan School District of Warren County are projected to decline for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. At the same time, the overall number of births has declined slightly but there are still small year to year fluctuations in the number of births. Similar to Fountain County, employment figures show low unemployment rates which will support population growth. Based on the information gathered, Warren County will not experience an increase in the overall demand for child care. While the overall population is projected to increase, both the school enrollment and the number of births have declined or are projected to decline. In addition, the only child care center in the county, Williamsport Day School is not currently full.

¹⁸ *Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana*

¹⁹ Phone interview on September 13, 1999. These numbers include 2 home based programs.

²⁰ Listed in *Fountain County Service Provider Directory* and information provided by Step Ahead/First Steps.

Fountain/Warren County Step Ahead Child Care Needs Assessment

Introduction

Child care issues are important to both parents and employers. Each year business and industries lose money due to lost work time from employees' child care problems. A national survey conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures found that 80% of employers reported that their employees were forced to miss work due to child care problems.¹⁹ One way to deal with this issue is to identify where the biggest child care needs are in a county and try and solve some of the problems. In order to identify where the biggest child care needs are in Fountain and Warren Counties three different methods were used: phone interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus group interviews. The first section of this report gives findings from phone interviews done with key community professionals. This section will give an overall perspective on child care issues. The next section contains the results of parent survey questionnaires. This section provides the clearest indication of the problems parents face in dealing with child care issues. The final section contains focus group interview data. Focus groups were done with both parents and child care providers. This section provides more in-depth information about the child care problems parents face as well as issues affecting providers. All of these sections together should help to provide a good picture of the child care needs in Fountain and Warren Counties.

Section 1: Interviews with Key Community Professionals

Interviews were conducted with key community professionals or "key informants" to learn about the current child care needs in the counties. Key informants are persons with an informed perspective on families and child care in Fountain and Warren Counties. Key informants were identified through Individual Resource Forms, as well as other members of the Step Ahead Council. Fifteen potential key informants were identified. Initial contact was made by phone. Nine key informants agreed to be interviewed. When a professional agreed to be interviewed an interview was scheduled. All interviews were done by phone and lasted no more than 25 minutes. A standard interview protocol was used. Each professional was asked about the child care needs of parents, providers, and the county in general. A copy of the interview protocol is included in *Appendix B*. The

¹⁹ *Ahead of the Curve: Why America's Leading Employers Are Addressing the Needs of New and Expectant Parents*, Families and Work Institute, 1998.

interviews were not taped but notes were taken by the interviewer with the consent of the interviewee.

Following the interview, information from each interview was summarized. The summaries were analyzed according to the following categories:

- The supply of quality child care available
- Factors parents consider when making choices about child care
- Parents' complaints about child care
- Unmet needs of families
- Unmet needs of child care providers
- Possible solutions for unmet needs of child care providers and parents

Child Care Supply

Community professionals were asked if they felt there was an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in Fountain and Warren Counties. Sixty-seven percent of the professionals (6 out of 9) said no, there was not an adequate supply of child care for all families in Fountain and Warren Counties. One professional said that "maybe" the child care supply was adequate and 2 professionals said yes, there was an adequate supply of child care in the counties.

Professionals were then asked why they answered the question about an adequate supply of child care like they did. Only one of the professionals that answered yes to the question gave a reason. The professional felt that some parents take advantage of child care programs and providers are not willing to take care of their children. Among the 6 professionals that said there was not an adequate supply and the one professional that felt that maybe the supply was adequate, two themes emerged: There are not enough child care providers in general and there are not enough licensed providers. Four professionals cited the lack of licensed care providers in the county. One of these professionals stated that providers do not want to go through the training process to get licensed. Another professional mentioned that more care providers are needed, particularly in Warren County. Most child care in the counties is private/ in-home care. There is one day care center in Warren County but there are none in Fountain County. On a different note, one professional said that the amount of licensed child care in the counties is improving but there is still a need for more 2nd and 3rd shift providers. Finally, one professional mentioned the low pay that providers make as a deterrent to attracting more providers.

Factors Parents Consider in Choosing Child Care

Community professionals were asked to think about the parents they were familiar with in Fountain and Warren Counties and list the most important factors these parents consider when making choices about child care and why they think these factors are important to parents. Professionals cited 4 main categories of factors that they considered to be important to parents in making choices about their child care: Quality, availability/location, cost, and safety. Because professionals could list more than one factor 23 total factors were listed. These 23 responses were categorized into the 4 categories. The most frequently cited category was quality of child care. According to professionals, parents are very concerned with the quality of child care they choose for their children. In forty-three percent (10 out of 23) of the responses professionals cited quality of child care as an important factor for parents. Quality was defined as care for the children, learning activities, age structure, and number of children being care by a care provider. Of the professionals citing quality as a concern, one felt that parents want their children to be treated with respect by the caregiver and to know that their child are well cared for. Other professionals said that parents are concerned that the provider has educational activities for the children. Educational activities will help children to be ready for elementary school. Similarly, quality was also defined as not having too many children in one home and having other children at the same age level so they can learn and play together. Quality is important to parents because they are concerned about their child's welfare.

In addition to quality child care, 6 responses or 26% dealt with the availability and/or location of care their child receives. Professionals discussed availability in terms types of care as well as the hours or shifts needed. Two professionals indicated the need for 2nd shift care and one professional indicated the need for 3rd shift care. Availability is a problem for parents because of their work schedules. Finding 2nd shift care is particularly a problem because care providers would like to take care of their own families at that time said one professional. Child care needs to be available when they are at work. Another professional discussed the need for infant care. In terms of location, two professionals emphasized that parents would like to use care that is close to home or on their way to work. Parents do not like to travel a long distance out their way for child care.

Two other factors cited by professionals were cost and safety. Four responses indicated that child care cost is a factor parents consider when choosing child care, while 3 referred to safety issues as a factor. Child care needs to be affordable for parents. Many families, particularly working poor families, have limited resources. The importance of cost as a factor often depends on the parent's income according to the professionals. In terms of safety, parents are concerned that they

can know and trust the care provider. They also like the child care to be open for parents to come and check on their children any time they want.

Child Care Problems for Families

Key community professionals also were asked to discuss some of the child care problems they felt Fountain and Warren Counties' parents face. The professionals listed 14 complaints. Overwhelmingly the biggest issue professionals discuss was availability of child care. Fifty percent of the complaints listed dealt with availability. Availability problems included lack of satisfactory child care providers, lack of 2nd and 3rd shift care, lack of sick care, and lack of flexible care. Along with availability of care, about 29% of the complaints (or 4 out of 14) cited quality of care issues as the most common complaints. Quality issues included unlicensed home, too many children in a home, and discipline problems among children in a home. Finally, another 14% of complaints (2 out of 14) cited the cost of child care as a common complaint of parents. Low income parents in particular have trouble paying for child care. Parents are also likely to pay more for licensed than nonlicensed care.

Unmet Child Care Needs of Fountain and Warren Counties

Professionals were asked to identify what they thought the most critical unmet child care needs of Fountain and Warren Counties were. Sixteen critical unmet needs were identified. Professionals could list as many needs as they felt were important. Everyone listed at least one need, seven persons identified two needs, and two persons identified three needs. The critical unmet needs identified can be grouped into four categories: Availability, licensing, quality, and cost.

Availability of child care was overwhelmingly cited as a critical need. Half of the needs cited (8 of 16) could be categorized as having to do with availability of child care. Of the 8 availability needs cited, 3 (37%) referred to general availability of child care and 5 (63%) referred to availability of a specific type of care. These specific types of child care include: Infant and Toddler care, 2nd shift care, and 3rd shift care. According to the community professionals child care availability issues seem to affect low income, single, and parents that work in factories the most. In addition, the lack of infant care is more likely to affect young families.

Community professionals were asked to provide some reasons as to why they felt the need was not being met. Professionals listed a few reasons as to why they felt availability of child care was a problem in Fountain and Warren Counties. One professional said that 2nd and 3rd shift care was a need because day care often closes early and people are not interested in providing late care.

Related to availability, professionals also identified licensing as a critical unmet need in the counties. Four out of the 16 or 25% of the unmet needs cited involved the need for more licensed child care providers. The need for licensed providers is widespread throughout both counties. This is particularly true for working families and also families with no extended family living in the area to help with child care. One of the reasons this need is hard to meet is the relatively low pay for providers and the low social value placed on child care as a profession.

Two out of 16 or 12.5% of the unmet needs cited involve quality of care issues. Quality issues include both education for care providers and educational activities for children. Professionals indicated that all families and especially middle income families are affected by the quality of child care. Likewise the need for higher quality child care is widespread in the county but less important as an unmet need than availability issues.

A final critical unmet need identified is the affordability or cost of child care. About 12.5% (2 of 16) of the unmet needs cited were cost issues. Families, particularly low income and single parent families, are most affected by the cost of child care.

After identifying the most critical unmet needs in Fountain and Warren Counties professionals were then asked to rank the needs in terms of priority for action. Of the 4 professionals that ranked the needs, the majority (3 of 4) said that child care availability and licensing were the top issues. One professional said availability in general was the biggest issue. Another professional cited the need for more infant/toddler care as the most important issue. And finally, one professional said there was a need for more licensed care providers. The other professional that ranked the needs said quality was the biggest unmet need. This professional also noted that parents do not care about quality.

Three professionals also indicated a second ranking need. Once again availability issues dominated these needs (2 of 3), while cost came in second place. Among the availability issues cited, both care for infants and the need for more care providers in general were each mentioned.

Finally, 2 professionals indicated a third critical unmet child care need (ranked 3rd). One person talked about quality child care issues. The other discussed the need for more 2nd and 3rd shift care.

Unmet Child Care Provider Needs

Along with the critical unmet needs of Fountain and Warren Counties and the needs of parents, professionals were also asked for their views on the unmet needs of Fountain and Warren child care providers. Professionals identified different issues they felt care providers face. A few professionals did not identify any issues, these

professionals either had no knowledge of provider needs or felt that provider needs were being met. Three basic themes emerged from professionals citing a need. Professionals identified the need for more educational programs for providers to increase their knowledge and help them become licensed. Professionals also identified the need for support groups for providers. These support groups would allow providers an opportunity to network with other providers and provide a support system for them. Support groups and educational opportunities would help to increase the quality of providers in the counties. Finally, the need for more infant/toddler room equipment was identified, as well as the need for more school-age activities, particularly in Fountain County.

Possible Solutions

The final issue professionals were asked to discuss was possible solutions to the child care needs facing both parents and providers that they identified. Professionals suggested a variety of different solutions ranging from encouraging on-site day care to educating parents about child care issues. In general, the solutions suggested by professionals can be grouped into 3 broad categories: Training, awareness, and networking.

In terms of training, 3 professionals said a solution to the counties child care problems would be to train more licensed providers. One person also mentioned the need to train providers for 2nd and 3rd shift work or encourage more people to provide care during these shifts. In addition, the need for more public child care centers was also mentioned.

Related to training is awareness, another solution to the child care problem is to increase the public's knowledge about the importance of becoming licensed. One way to do this would be to advertise either in the newspaper or on TV or to write a news release. Another way to advertise the importance of becoming licensed and to attract more providers would be to put an ad in the yellow pages of the phonebook. The ad needs to include information about the help Step Ahead can provide, including money, equipment, and training to get licensed, and also the role of Connexions, which provides training to both licensed and unlicensed care providers.

Finally, one professional stressed the need to work with local businesses. There needs to be more business participation in child care, particularly the larger factories in the counties including Harrison Steel and MasterGuard. One way to do this would be to encourage local businesses/factories and the school systems to support on-site or near-site child care. All of these networking strategies can aid in the development of both employer support for child care and possibly more child care options for the future.

Conclusions

The majority of community professionals interviewed felt that the child care supply in Fountain and Warren Counties is inadequate. Suggestions on what to do varied. Four central themes emerged from the interviews with community professionals: Availability, licensing, quality, and cost of child care. Each of these themes represents a critical unmet need in the counties with the need for more licensed care being the most pressing.

Recommendations

Community professionals proposed a number of different solutions to the child care unmet needs facing Fountain and Warren Counties. Of their solutions and the needs that they discussed four recommendations emerged:

1. Both counties need to increase the availability of child care, particularly for infant/toddlers and for 2nd and 3rd shifts.
2. There is a need for more licensed care in both counties. Unlicensed providers need to be made aware of the opportunities available to become licensed. In addition, there needs to be a public awareness campaign involving newspaper articles, and possible a Yellow Page ad to advertise for new providers.
3. There is a need to coordinate county child care efforts with local businesses and factories. More networking with local business, particularly with human resource representatives, needs to be done. One way to start the networking process would be to organize a seminar for local business representatives to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Emphasis on the problems child care issues create for parents and ultimately business (e.g., lost work days, stress) would be important.
4. Finally, there is also a need to educate parents about child care issues: How to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for child care, the importance of licensing for providers, etc. The Step Ahead Council could produce a brochure about what to look for in a provider.

Section 2: Parent Survey Questionnaire

"Quality child care provides a safe, healthy, and educational learning environment at reasonable cost." Williamsport Parent, Survey Questionnaire

The second data analysis method used was survey questionnaires. Parent survey questionnaires were developed and administered to parents throughout Fountain and Warren Counties. The surveys allowed the researchers to collect quantitative data from many parents. The surveys were designed to take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Parents were asked to

complete questions about the ages of their children, the current child care they use and the type of child care they would prefer to use, the problems they have experienced with child care, the effect of the problems, and what issues are important to them when choosing child care.

The surveys were administered by local businesses and social service agencies. Local businesses and social service agencies were contacted by phone by the research team and asked if they would allow their employees to complete the survey. Most of the businesses/agencies contacted agreed to participate. Surveys were mailed to the contact person and distributed. A copy of the survey is included in *Appendix C*. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and frequencies. Analyses are done for all respondents (families), by the age of their children, and by county.

Survey Respondents

A total of 210 completed surveys were received. The return rate was about 16% (1328 surveys were distributed). Of the returned surveys, 21 surveys were completed by persons with no children under age 18. In addition, 2 were excluded because the respondents did not work or live in either county. Finally, 1 survey was excluded because it was a duplicate (one family completed 2 surveys). After the nonusable surveys were discarded there were 187 usable surveys.

Location

Table 1 contains the location of survey respondents by their place of residence and where they work, by county. More surveys were returned from Fountain County. This was expected because Fountain County has a larger population. In Fountain County many of the respondents either live and or work in Attica. In Warren County over half of the survey respondents live in Williamsport. Fountain County surveys include all respondents that either live or work in Fountain County. If a respondent lives in Fountain County and works in Warren County the survey is included in data for both counties. In addition, there were a relatively large

number of respondents (about 21% live and 16% work) that did not indicate where they lived or worked. Instead they checked either town or county. These surveys are not included in the county level analyses but are included in the overall analysis.

Table 1: Town Live and Work by County for All Families

Fountain	Live	Work
Attica	30	21
Veedersburg	17	15
Covington	19	6
Kingman/Cates	14	3
Hillsboro/Wallace	4	1
Newtown/Mellett	2	0
Unknown Town	1	2
Do Not Work	-	19
Total	87	67

Warren	Live	Work
Williamsport	33	15
West Lebanon	7	16
Attica	5	1
Kramer	4	0
Marshfield	3	0
Pine Village	1	2
Pence	1	0
Do Not Work	-	13
Total	58	65

Other County/State	Live	Work
Crawfordsville	0	11
West Lafayette	1	6
Fowler	1	1
Oxford	0	1
Mansfield	0	1
Danville, IL	0	6
Unknown County	40	29
Total	42	55

A small number of parents (19 in Fountain and 13 in Warren) indicated that they did not work outside the home. These respondents tended to have very young children. Because the surveys were primarily distributed through places of employment, it is not surprising that there would be few stay at home parents among the respondents.

Age of children

There were 400 children in the 187 families that responded to the survey. Families had an average of 2.2 children with family size ranging from 1 child to 7 children. The mean or average age of the children is 6.34 years. *Figure 4* contains the number of children of respondents by age for each county. The results show that the needs of families with children at each age are reflected in the survey. The largest category of children in both counties is those ages 3-5. Respondents had 75 children between age 3 and age 5 in Fountain County and 43 children in Warren County. In Fountain County, the second largest category of children was those under age 3 (57 children), followed by 49 children aged 6-12. In Warren County, there were 36 children ages 6-12 and 32 children under age 3. Child care is of the biggest concern to parents with children under age 6. Children under age 6 are not old enough for school or to stay alone and require child care. The age distributions are similar to the age distributions of all children in both Fountain and Warren Counties.²⁰

When Do You Need Child Care?

Respondents were asked to indicate how often and what hours do they need child care. The overwhelming response was that they needed child care 5 days a week (Monday through Friday) (*Figure 5*) and most needed it during the day (or 1st shift) (*Figure 6*). Sixty-eight respondents indicated they needed child care 5 days a week, while 72 said they needed child care sometime during the day. Fourteen respondents reported needing child care during 2nd shift or during the evening hours and 11 reported needing 3rd shift or nighttime care.

Types of Child Care Currently Used and Preferred

Parent Survey: What do you consider quality child care?

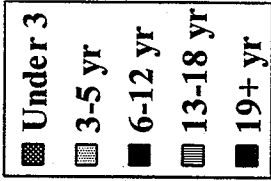
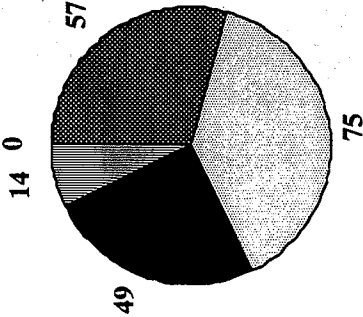
"The care my family gives my children.", Parent

Respondents were asked to indicate the type(s) of child care they currently use and the type(s) they would prefer to use (*Figure 7*). The majority of respondents currently use family for child care. Family includes themselves, their spouse or partner, an older child, or other relative. The largest category of current care is care for children in their

²⁰ Based on population estimates by age group for Indiana Counties from the Indiana Business Research Center, 1997 data.

Figure 4: Age of Children by County

Fountain County



Warren County

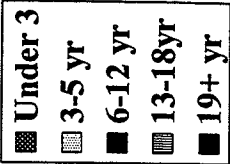
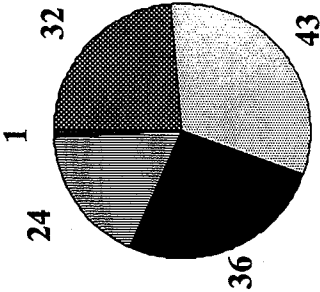


Figure 5: How Often Do You Need Child Care?

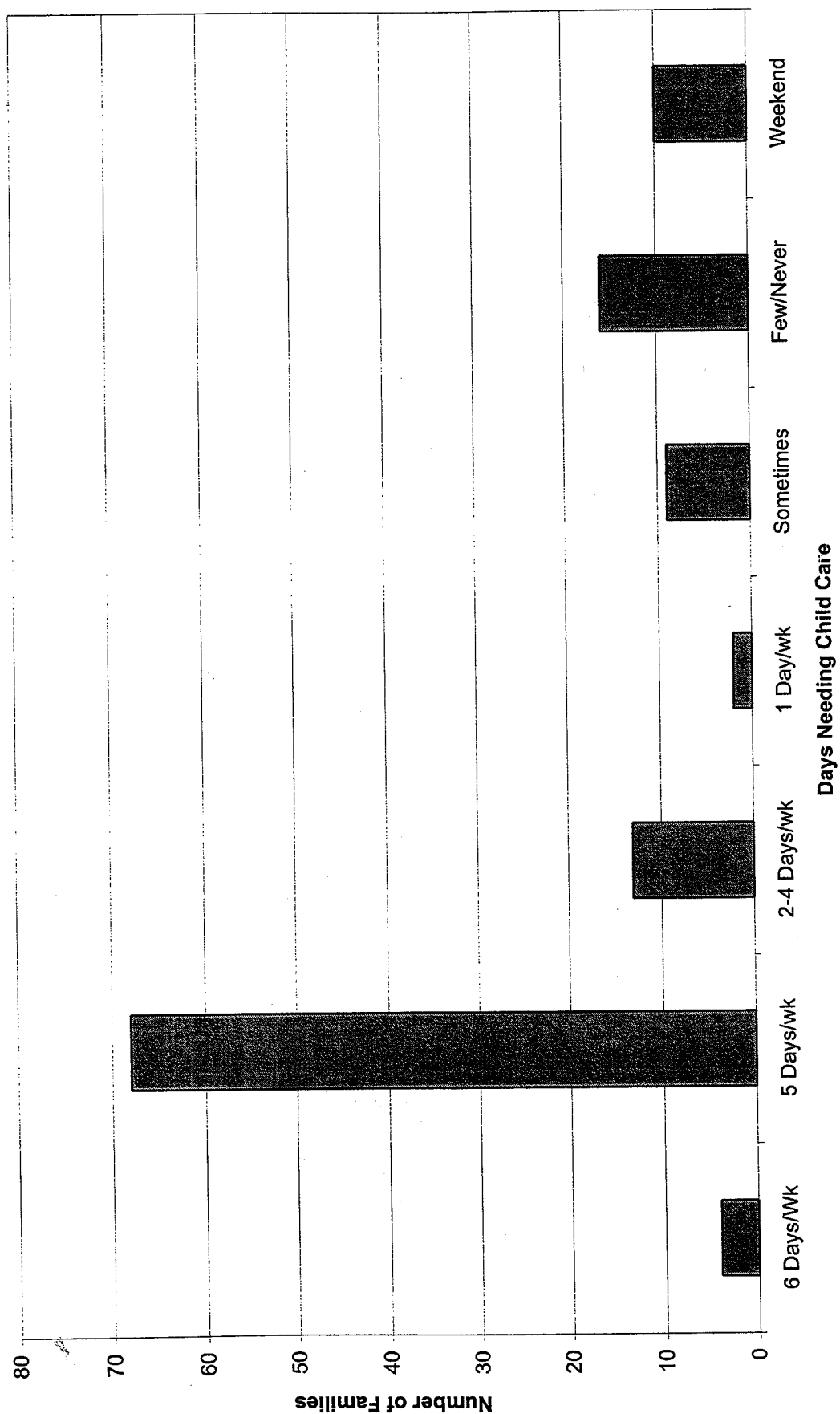
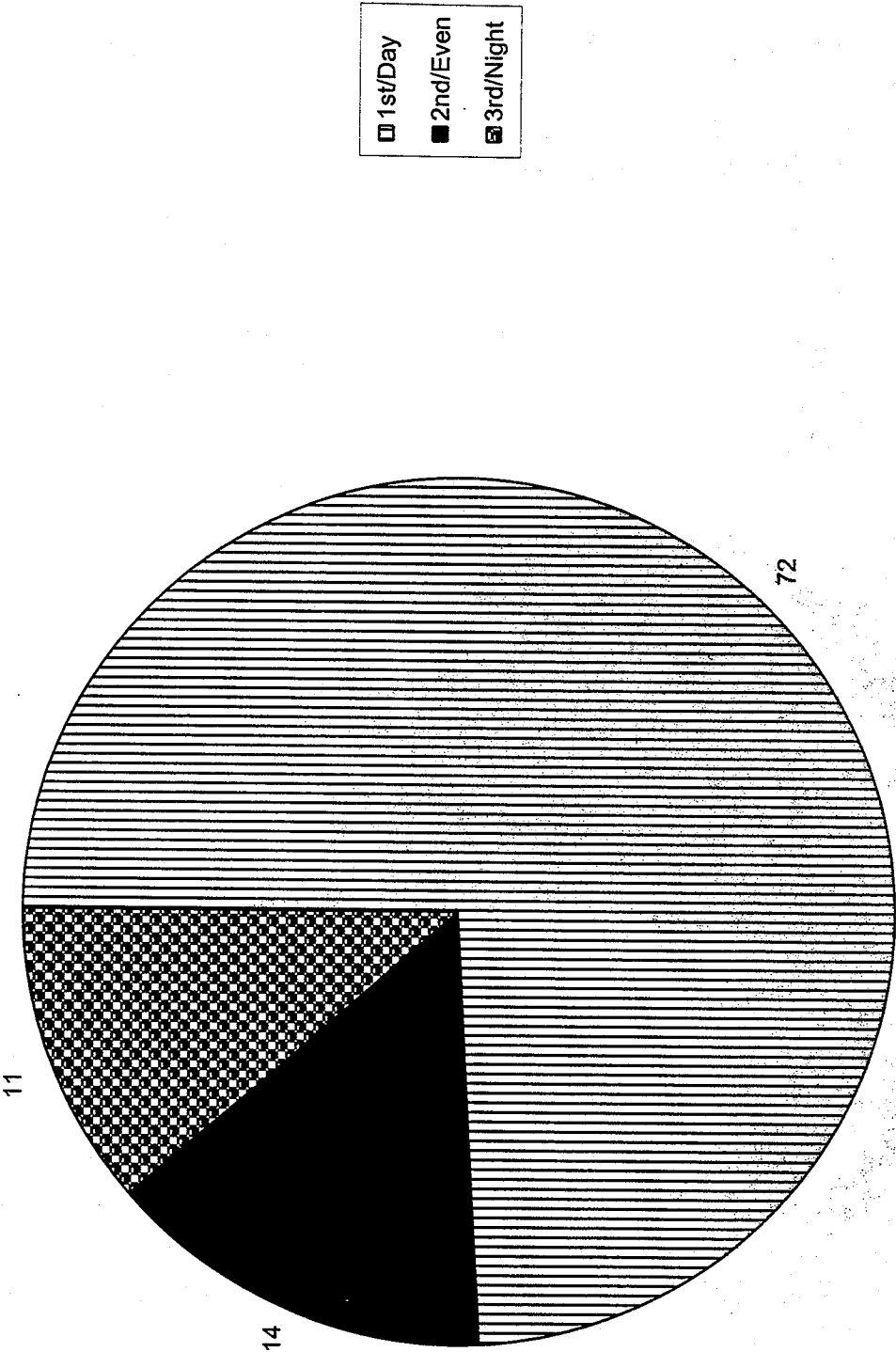


Figure 6: What Hours Do You Need Child Care?
(Number of Families Needing Care)



own home (44%), followed by care by a relative (39%), Head Start (26%), and care by a babysitter or unlicensed care provider (25%). Respondents were asked to check as many forms of child care as they currently use. Many checked more than one form. The least common categories of care currently being used are child care ministry (1%) and licensed center care (3%).

"Me, the mother, taking care of them",
Covington Parent,
Survey

At the same time, when asked what type(s) of child care they would prefer the largest percentage of respondents indicated that they would prefer to care for their children at home (21%) followed by having a relative care for their child (18%). But in both cases a

much smaller percentage of people would prefer to care for their children at home or use relatives than currently use these types of care.

"Licensed person who is caring and kind, reasonable rates, and a safe environment.",
Veedersburg Parent,
Survey

Overall the results show that the two largest types of child care in the current use responses (home care and relative care) were much smaller in the preferred column. At the same time, more respondents indicated they would prefer to use a licensed child care home or center than current use licensed care. In addition, while 25% of respondents currently use a

babysitter or an unlicensed home, only 6% indicated they would prefer this type of care.

Use and Preference by County

The current and preferred child care analysis can be examined by county. The results are listed in *Figure 8*. The same basic patterns of usage found in the overall analysis show up in the county level analysis. For both counties the most common type of child care used is care for children in own home, followed by relative care. In Fountain County Head Start is more commonly used among respondents than in Warren County. This is a function of who returned the surveys. Many of the surveys were completed by Head Start parents. In terms of county level differences, families in Warren County are less likely to prefer licensed home care than families in Fountain County. They are also less likely to want to care for their children at home or to use a spouse for care or another relative.

Use and Preference by Age

Current child care use and child care preference also vary by age. Families were categorized as less than 3 if they had at least one child under age 3, 3-5 if they had at least one child age 3 to 5, and 6-12 if they had one child between ages 6 and 12. Families could be classified in more than one category if they had children of

Figure 7: Current and Preferred Child Care for All Families

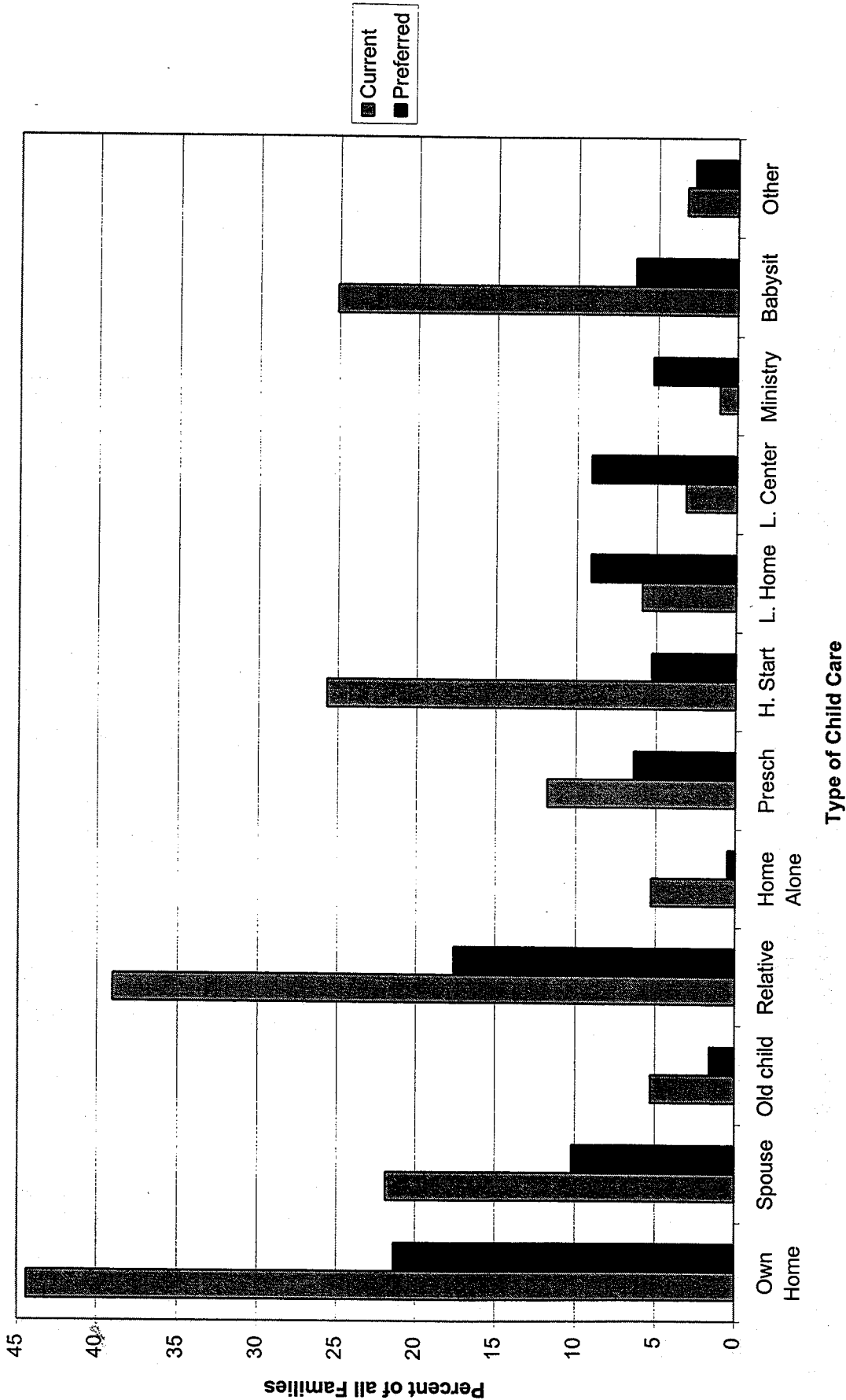
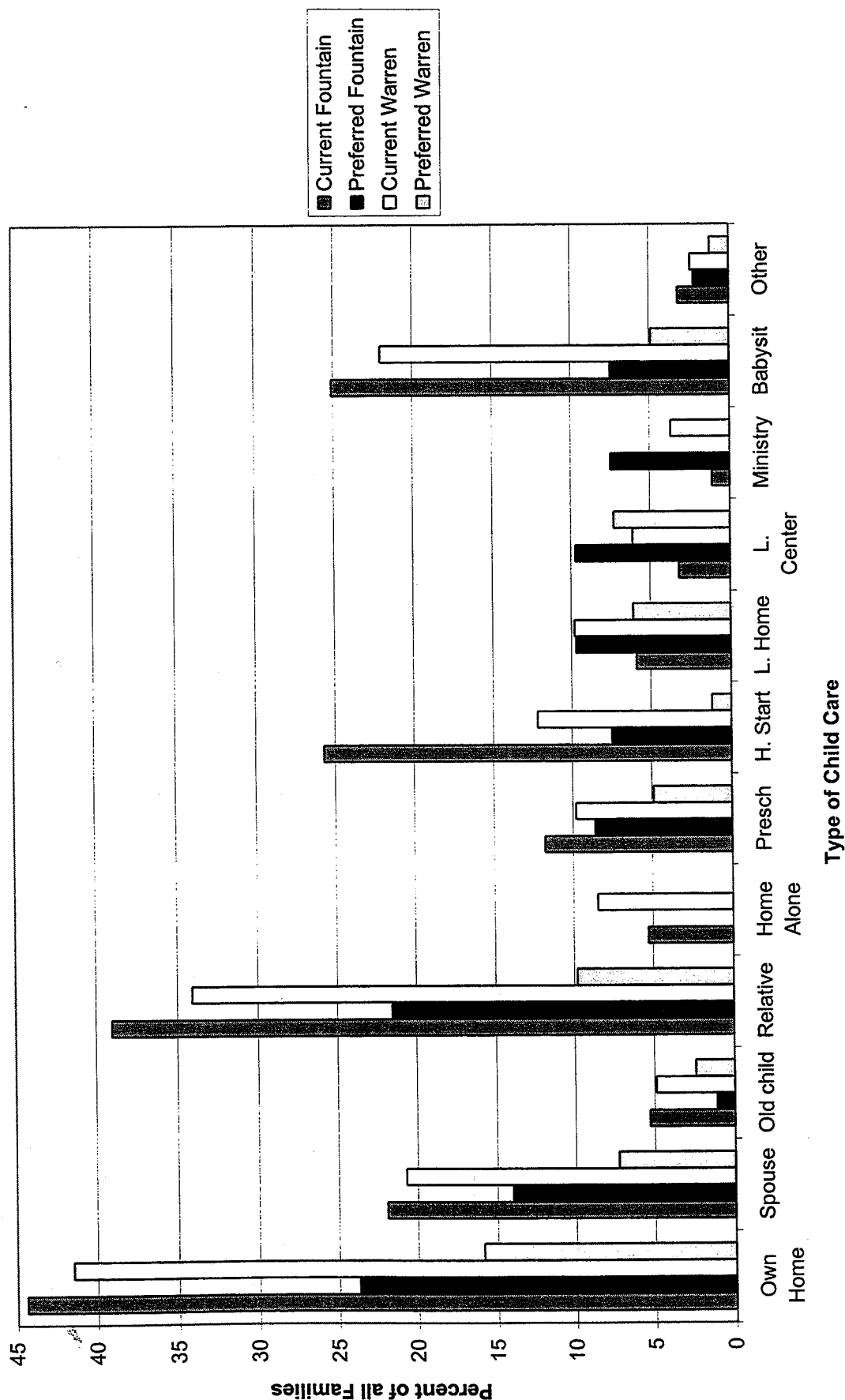


Figure 8: Current and Preferred Child Care for All Families in Fountain and Warren Counties



different ages. Classifying families by age helps to illustrate age differences in child care needs.

"A place where the caregiver treats the children like they were their own, in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. A place you hope they are treated like at home or even better.", Covington Parent, Survey

The results for age specific current child care use and preference are listed in *Appendix D*. In general, the age specific results show similar patterns to the overall results with care in own home and relative care as the most common types of current care. Respondents with preschoolers (3-5) are more likely to use preschool or Head Start for child care. The

large percentage for Head Start is once again a function of who completed the surveys. When asked what type of child care they prefer, a high percentage of

"The children get taken care of properly and learn new things, educational, and that they have fun and get along with others.", Kingman Parent, Survey

respondents with at least one child under age 3 indicated that they would prefer to stay home with their child (28%) or use relative care (25%). At the same time, parents with a child under age 3 indicated they would also prefer some form of licensed care (home or center) for their child(ren).

These results show that a family's child care use and preference depends heavily on the age(s) of their child(ren). What is desirable to a family with an infant

is not necessarily what is desirable to a family with a four year old.

Child Care Problems

Parent Survey: How do child care problems affect you?

"I can not miss work! Therefore, it means that I sometimes have to leave my children in questionable care.", Parent, Survey

Respondents were then asked to indicate the problems they have had with child care in the last year. The results for all respondents are listed in *Figure 9*. The results by age are listed in *Appendix D*. The problems respondents have had vary by county. For all families, the most dominant problem was finding sick care for their child (23%). The next highest category for all respondents was a tie at 15% between no 2nd and 3rd shift care and not knowing how to locate child care.

Sick care was particularly a problem for families in Warren County (28%). In Warren County, sick care was almost twice as large as the next highest category of problems (respondents could mark more than one problem). The next highest category of problems Warren County respondents indicated was no 2nd and 3rd shift care (12%), followed by a tie between not knowing what type of care is available (10%) and other problems. Other problems mentioned include: Lack of in-home

different ages. Classifying families by age helps to illustrate age differences in child care needs.

"A place where the caregiver treats the children like they were their own, in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. A place you hope they are treated like at home or even better.", Covington Parent, Survey

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Child Care Problems

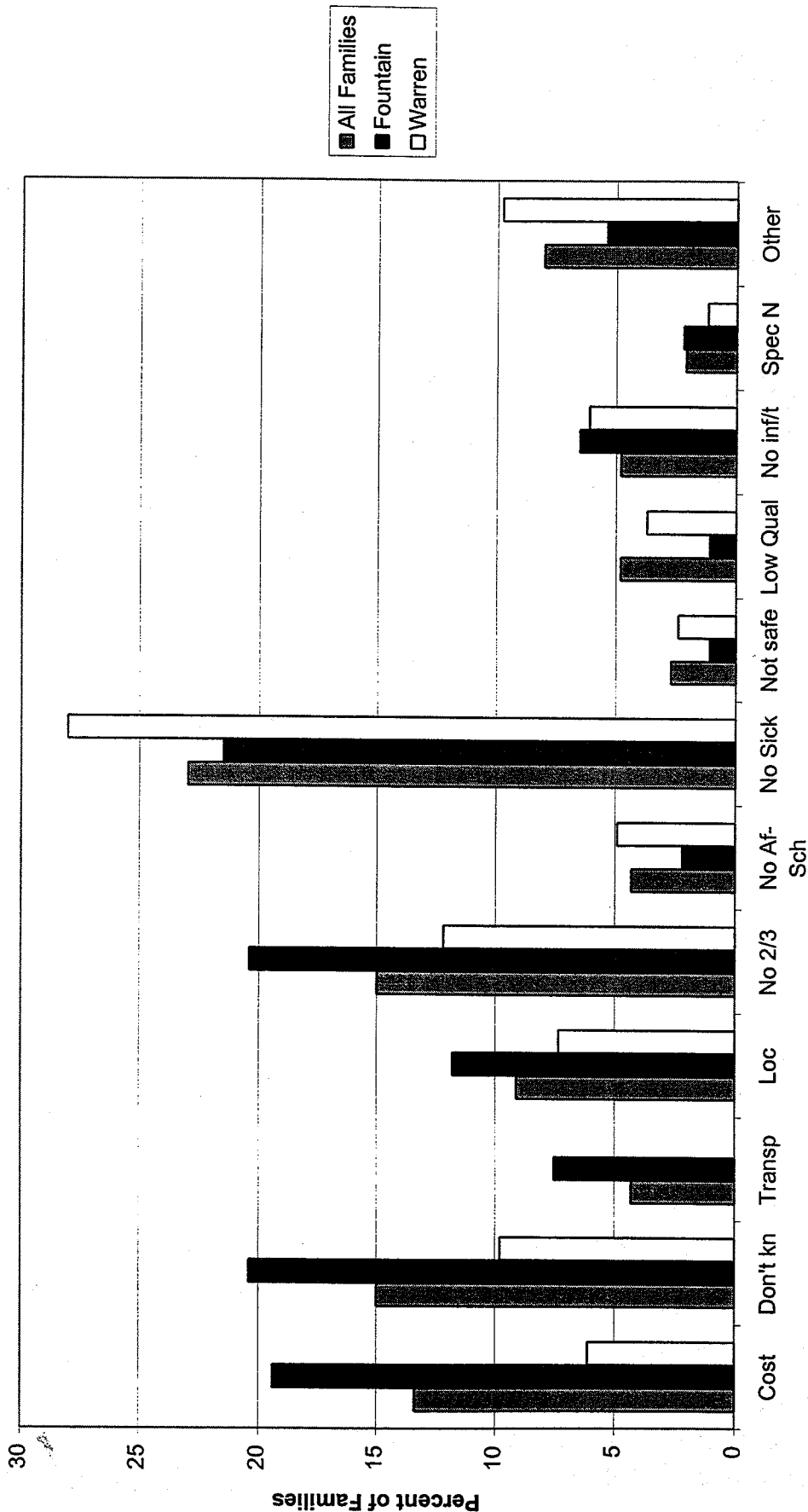
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Figure 9: Child Care Problems Experienced by All Families and by County



Child Care Problems Experienced in Last 12 Months

babysitting during weekend, difficulty finding part-time care, difficulty finding child care because work from 5am to 5pm, and lack of child care for older children.

In Fountain County, the largest problem was once again sick care (22%). In contrast to Warren County sick care did not seem to be the dominant problem. Instead, in Fountain County sick care was followed closely by not knowing the type of care available (20%), no 2nd and 3rd shift care (20%), and the cost of child care (19%).

Of respondents that indicated the cost of child care was too high 15

"Missing work – don't get paid enough to hire babysitter and work and pay bills.", Kingman Parent, Survey

respondents listed how much they would be willing to pay for one child/week. The overall average desired cost was \$51.33 /week. The range of desired cost was from \$10 to \$100. The relatively low number may be a reflection of a lack of knowledge of the cost of quality child care or just a reflection of the income level of persons that answered the survey. The results for cost

are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Desired Cost of Child Care /Child/Week

	Overall	Fountain	Warren
Mean (Average)	\$51.33/child/week	\$53.50	\$41.25
Range	\$10-100/child/week	\$15-100	\$10-75
Number of Respondents	15	10	4

Finally, parents seem to have had few problems with unsafe child care (3% of all families). At the same time safe child care is an important issue for parents.

"Make sure children are fed, safe, and not abused... Clean safe environment.", Attica Parent, Survey

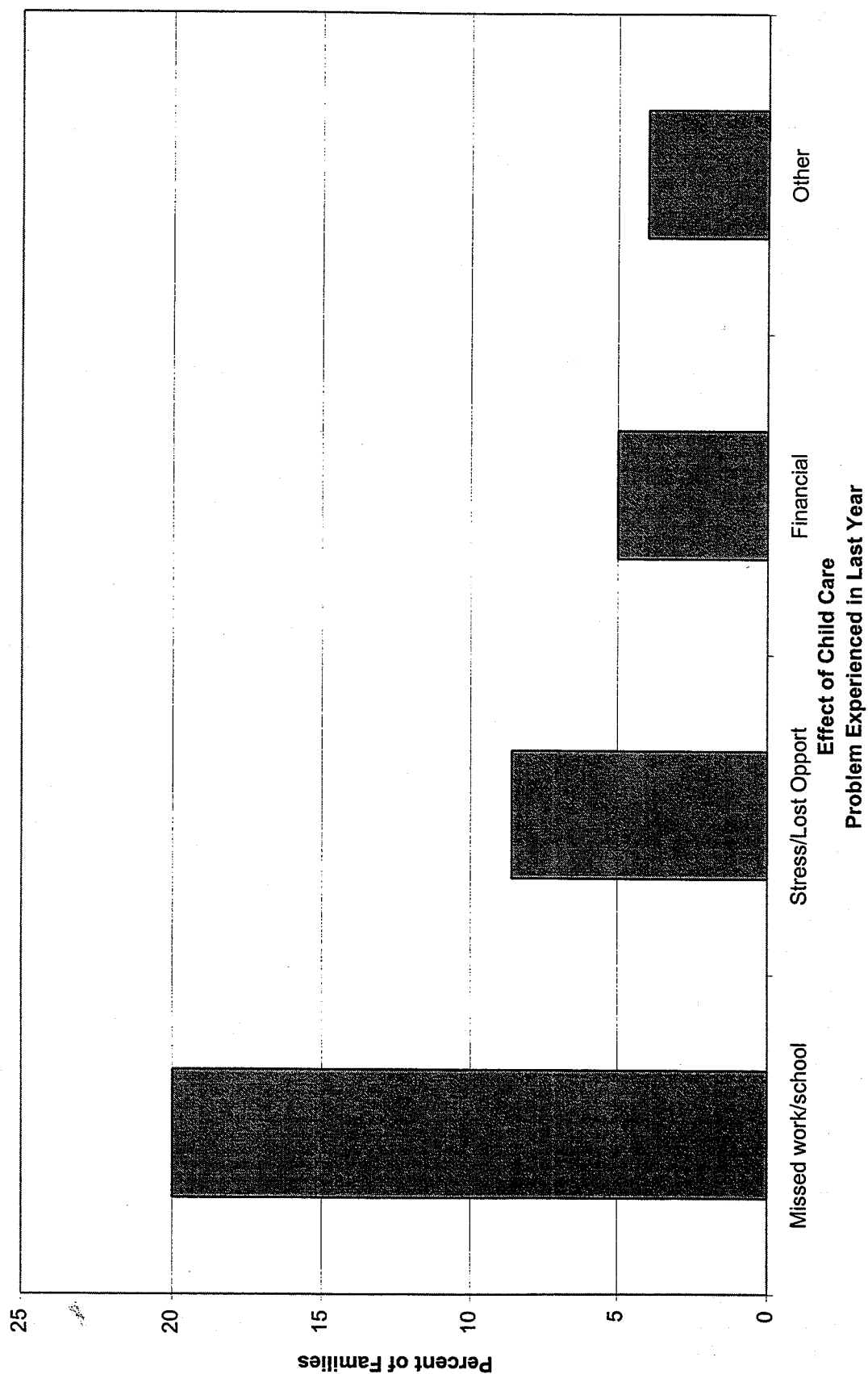
"Caretaker who is loving, nurturing, safe, no spanking, someone with experience and references, preferably in home.", Kramer Parent, Survey

Impact of Child Care Problems on Families

In addition to reporting the child care problems they faced; respondents were asked how these problems affected them in the last year (*Figure 10*). Respondents were asked to respond to an open-ended question about how child care problems have affected them. They were given "missed work hours" as an example

and this was the most common category described. The responses to the question can be grouped into 4 categories. Respondents could list more than one effect. Twenty percent of all respondents reported missing hours or days of work or school

Figure 10: Effect of Child Care Problems for All Families



"Paying for child care out of my pocket is putting [my] bills behind.", Hillsboro Parent, Survey

due to child care problems. Along with missing work/school, 9% of parents also reported that they suffered stress or lost work opportunities as a result of their child care problems. Finally, 5% of respondents indicated that financial issues were a problem due to child care. The first two issues in particular have implications for both workers and employers. Workers are not as productive as they could be because of problems with their child care. At the same time employers lose money due to lost work time and poor quality of work. One recent national study found that women with children under age 6 missed an average of 8.5 days of work per year due to family-related issues (e.g., when children are sick).²¹ At the same time men with children under age 6 also missed an average of 5 days of work.

Respondents also listed some other problems they experienced as a result of their child care problems. These problems include: Having to take child to work twice a month, leaving child in unfamiliar place to sleep, and not being able to trust others to watch their child.

Choices

The final section of the survey questionnaire asked parents to indicate what

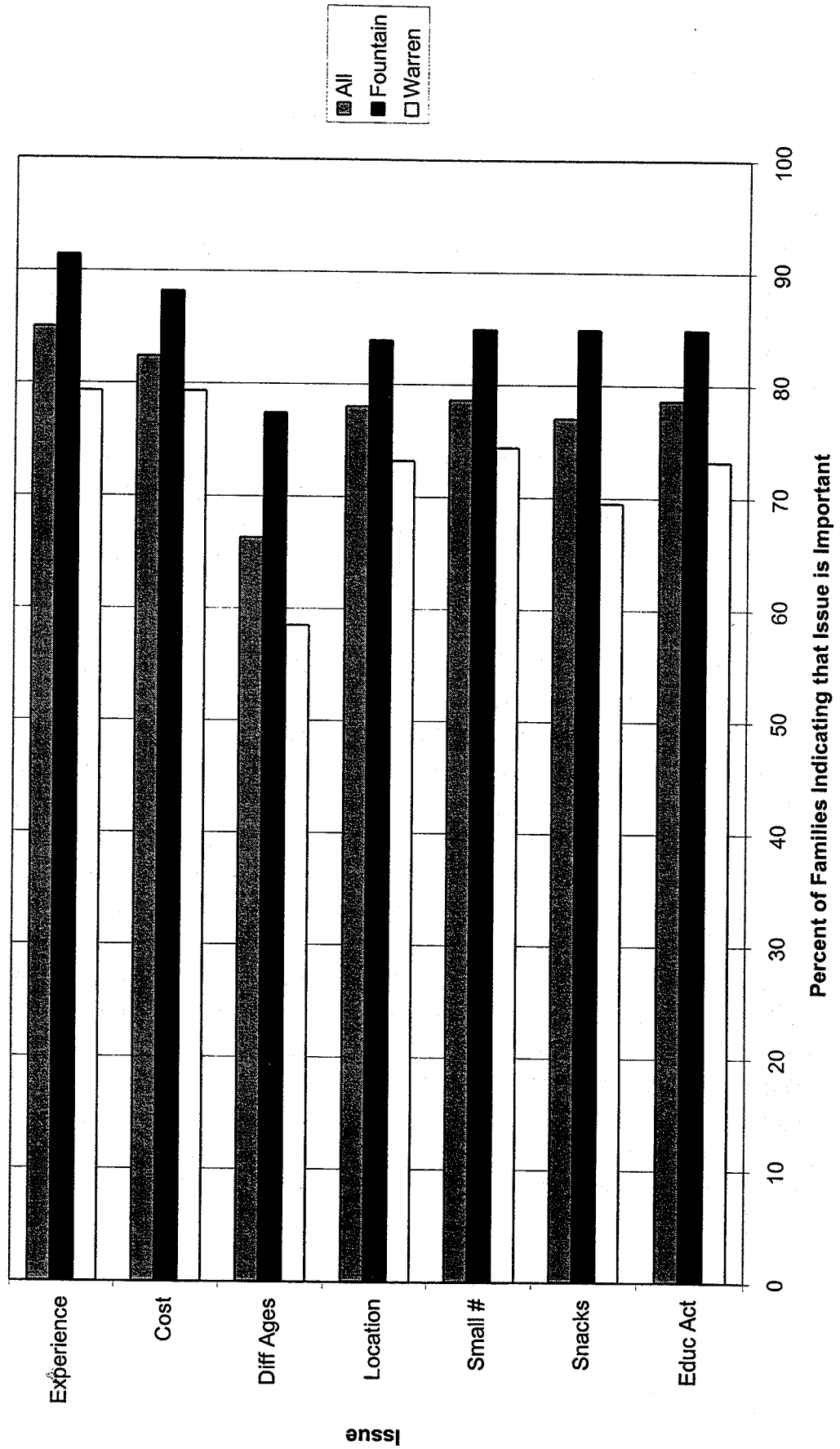
"A place that gives him his needs as a child, attention, discipline, good morals, lots of experience, love, educational.", Parent, Survey

issues are important to them when they are choosing a child care provider. Parents were given a list of issues and were asked to indicate whether they agreed,

disagreed, or had no opinion that a statement was important to them. *Figure 11* contains the provider choice issue results for all parents and by county. For all but one of the issues a high percentage (over 75%) of all parents agreed that the issue was important to their child care decisions (e.g., provider offers educational activities, snacks and/or meals, small number of children in group, close to home, reasonable cost, and provider is experienced). Only when asked about the provider accepting children of different ages did more parents indicate that the issue was not important (4.8%) or they had no opinion (13%). An additional 15% of parents did not answer the question. There were some county level differences in parents' responses to the issues. For the most part, parents in Warren County were less likely to agree that the statements were important to their child care decisions.

²¹ *Ahead of the Curve: Why America's Leading Employers Are Addressing the Needs of New and Expectant Parents*, Families and Work Institute, 1998.

Figure 11: Important Issues When Choosing a Child Care Provider by County



Choice by Age

"Someone who can give my child the attention he needs and someone who can read to him and get him ready to learn in school.", Kingman
Parent of a 2 year old,
Survey

When the provider decision issues are broken down by age, the answers are slightly different (see *Appendix D*). Some issues are more important to parents with younger children than those with school aged children. Parents with a child under age 3 were the most likely to agree with the choice issues. For example, 91% of parents with a child under age 3 said that provider experience was important to them.

Conclusions

Survey questionnaires were completed by parents throughout Fountain and Warren Counties. While the sample of parents was not randomly selected nor was it representative of all parents in the counties, the survey results do provide some indication of the child care needs of parents in the counties. The surveys also show that Fountain and Warren Counties have somewhat different needs. When compared with the population distributions of Fountain and Warren Counties, the surveys are representative of the population distributions of the counties. It is important to keep this in mind when examining the results.

The majority of respondents needed child care during the day and most needed it Monday through Friday. Family care is the most common type of child care currently used by Fountain and Warren County families. While some parents preferred to watch their children themselves or to use a family member, many parents indicated that they would prefer a different type of child care such as a licensed child care home or center. Warren County parents were less likely than Fountain County parents to prefer family care or a licensed child care home. The biggest problem respondents in both counties face with child care is when their child is sick. Families also needed more 2nd and 3rd shift care and had trouble knowing how to located care. These problems were most likely to affect parents by causing them to miss work or school. Among Fountain County parents, child care problems include sick care, lack of knowledge of care available to them, no 2nd and 3rd shift care, and high costs. Warren County parents were most concerned with finding sick care. They also had had problems finding 2nd and 3rd shift care and knowing what type of care is available to them.

Recommendations

Based on the parent surveys the following recommendations can be made:

1. Licensed sick care is needed in both counties, but is particularly a problem for Warren County families.
2. There is a need for more evening and nighttime care. Both counties need to increase their number of slots for 2nd and 3rd shift care.
3. Many parents are unaware of what child care is available to them. Plan a public awareness campaign targeted at parents to educate and inform them about available child care and quality child care. The campaign should also focus on what they should expect to pay for quality child care and why this is important. This campaign could be done in conjunction with the child care referral agency, Connexions.
4. There is a need for more infant and toddler care. Parents with young children often have trouble finding care for their child.
5. Finally, there is a need to educate local businesses about the impact of child care problems on their employees. Many employees with young children are forced to miss work, leave work early, and/or have concentration problems at work as a result of child care problems. One way to deal with this problem would be to encourage more business sponsored care, such as on-site or near-site day care. This would allow parents a more stable day care situation for their children and would also reduce the stress of traveling to child care.

Section 3: Focus Group Interviews

Three focus groups were conducted with parents and child care providers in Fountain and Warren Counties.²² Two groups were conducted with parents and one with providers. The parent groups were held at MasterGuard in Veedersburg and WIC in Covington. The size of the groups ranged from 3 to 5 participants with 8 total parent participants. Two males and 6 females participated in the parent focus groups. The provider group was held at the Williamsport Public Library with 2 providers from Fountain County and 2 from Warren County. The providers were all licensed home care providers and all were female. Each focus group interview took about an hour and participants were asked questions about their current child care usage, problems they have had with child care, and the unmet child care needs of Fountain and Warren Counties. Providers were asked about the supply of child care in Fountain and Warren Counties, the unmet needs of providers and other provider issues, and the unmet child care needs of Fountain and Warren Counties. Because only licensed home care providers were represented in the provider group, caution should be used in generalizing the results to nonlicensed providers. Nonlicensed providers often have different problems and issues than licensed providers. *Appendices E and F* contain the Interview Protocols that were used.

Types of Child Care Families Prefer

Parents were first asked to describe the type of child care they would prefer to use. In general, they emphasized a desire for quality child care. In this case quality is defined as both safe and educational child care.

"Well you want someone you can depend on, that is responsible, that wouldn't back out all of a sudden on you and then leave you in a bind. ... So you want someone to take care of your child real good, make sure that they are fed and not being abused." Parent.

"[Place where there is] socialization, good contact with children as well as adults, a learning environment, structure." Parent.

²² Many attempts were made by the research team to conduct parent focus groups. One additional focus group was scheduled with Head Start parents but no participants came.

Child Care Problems

Parents were also asked to discuss some of the child care problems they have had with child care. Parents discussed a variety of problems including: Poor quality care, relative care, child care hours, child care cost, and sick care.

Poor Quality Care

The first problem parents discussed was poor quality child care. Many had experienced poor quality care at some point in their child care experiences. Parents seemed to be aware of some signs of poor quality care. One parent described an incidence of poor care,

"I noticed that [child] did not want to stay there, he screamed when I left and he was excited to see me when I got there. He was hitting, and he's just 2 and he never did that. So I had that babysitter for like 3 days and that was it. You have to be very particular about who you leave your child with. You can't just trust anyone." Female Parent.

Another parent spoke about the same issue and discussed a way to tell if your child is receiving good care.

"You've got to watch your child too. I mean parents, it kind of scares them if they go to pick the child up at the sitter and the child doesn't want to leave. That means they are happy there. When they are too little to tell you, you need to go by their actions." Female parent.

Finally, another parent discussed a past experience with poor child care.

"You know I have had this past experience, when I was here and when family was not around, when you are trying to trust somebody, you are giving them your child who is 3 years old and can't fend for themselves. There are issues with that that are very deep, when you get the sitter that yells at them all the time, their behavior starts to change." Male Parent

Relative Care

Parents also discussed some of the problems they have had with having relatives watching their children. Most of these problems related to discipline and structure. For example, according to one parent,

"When you get grandparents to keep them or family they tend to spoil them. And then you have problems with that. Whereas, if you were taking them to another daycare there would be structure, there would be a schedule."

Female Parent

Likewise another parent discussed the same issue.

"Family is great because they love them like you do but they tend to go overboard with it and spoil them. Let them get away with more than you would. And then they hand them over to the parents..." Female Parent

Many of the parents in the focus groups currently use relatives for child care or have used them in the past.

Child Care Hours

Parents also discussed the problems they have had with finding care during the hours they work. Factory workers in particular have problems because they work long shifts.

"If you have to work 12 hour shifts [it is hard to find child care]", Parent

In addition to long shifts, parents also have trouble finding care if they need to work overtime.

"This place will let you know a half an hour before you have to leave [that you need to stay]." Parent

Cost of Child Care

Cost is another issue parents discussed. Many felt that the cost of child care was a problem for parents, especially low income parents.

"I think money is a big problem.", Female Parent

"Daycare is expensive... and people who have several children cannot always afford daycare, especially ... welfare to work moms.", Female Parent

Sick Child

Finally, parents discussed the issue of sick child care. Unless a child care provider is licensed to take sick children they will not take care of a child that is sick.

For parents this is often a big problem. Many end of taking days off work to stay home with their children.

"If your kids are ill. There is nothing to do with them." Female Parent

"You have to stay home and for some people that may mean losing their job."
Female Parent

Impact of Child Care Issues on Family and Work

The child care problems parents face can impact all aspects of their family's life. Parents discussed the impact these issues have had on their family and their work life. One of the big issues parents discussed was having to miss work or having to limit the work they can do because they were not able to find child care.

"There have been times when I can't come in for some reason, because there is nobody that can watch my child. [I] have only been able to do a portion of my job for quite some time.", Male Parent.

Parents also discussed that some shifts were harder to find someone to watch their children during than others. They felt that 2nd shift was particularly a problem because people do not want to watch someone else's children during the afternoon and evening hours.

"Second shift is one of the hardest, first is kind of easy, but in the past I used to work second shift and I had all kinds of problems with my employees. Nobody wants to watch children from 2 in the afternoon to 11 o'clock at night."
Male parent.

What Would You Do If You Lost Your Provider Tomorrow?

Parents were asked what they would do if they suddenly lost their provider. Some parents felt this would be a bigger problem than others. Parents with school age children were less concerned with the prospect of losing their child care than those with younger children. Most parents also said they would have to take time off work to find a new provider.

"I can just take a couple days off of work and find someone, ...[it] might be hard but I can find someone." Female Parent

"I used to [take] regular vacation days and use them for days off instead of vacation [when lost provider]." Female Parent

For other parents, the issue would have a much greater long-term impact on their lives.

"[I] would have to cut back work hours.", Parent

"I would probably just have to stay home from school...[It is] very expensive to be home schooled." Teen Parent

Problems for Providers

Supply of Licensed Providers

In the provider focus group interview, providers were asked to identify some of the needs that child care providers face.²³ All of the providers felt that there was not an adequate supply of quality child care in either county. According to the providers, much of the child care in the counties is done by unlicensed persons or babysitters. Providers felt that most licensed care was quality care because licensed caregivers want to do their best but finding quality unlicensed care is much more problematic.

Along with discussing the lack of quality providers, providers also discussed some of their unmet needs. These needs include: Backup support, education, and grants. Providers discussed their need for backup help. They often have trouble finding backup help when they need to take time off during the day. Parents often have trouble finding backup care when providers go on vacation. All the providers mentioned that they give parents plenty of notice about their vacations. In addition to discussing their need for more backup support, providers also discussed their desire to obtain more education. They said the training sessions offered through Connexions were helpful but they often have trouble attending during the day. They would prefer training sessions to be held at night or on the weekends. Finally, providers discussed the issue of grants. Providers would like to have grant information distributed to them on a regular basis. They are particularly interested in grants for educational activities. They also need more information on the resources available to them.

Unmet County Needs

²³ The audio tape malfunctioned during the provider focus group so no direct quotes can be cited for providers.

Both providers and parents were asked to identify some of the unmet child care needs in Fountain and Warren Counties. Each listed a number of unmet needs. Providers felt that infant care was the biggest need, while the parent groups said that a child care center in Fountain County would be the most helpful. Other unmet needs identified include: School age care, special needs care, 3rd shift care, sick care, and employer education. Providers also discussed the issues of cost and quality of care.

Infant Care

Providers identified infant care as the most critical unmet need in the counties. According to providers, there are more requirements to care for infants. They also mentioned that there is some school offered infant care but the care is not being used because of the cost and when it is available. According to providers parents need to work harder to budget and prioritize so they can afford the care that is available to them.

Child Care Center

Both parent groups felt that a child care center in Fountain County is the biggest unmet need. One group wanted a 24 hour facility while the other group expressed doubt that Warren and Fountain Counties were large enough to support a 24 hour facility.

"...extended hours are necessary, [but I] don't know how feasible it would be in a small county like Fountain and Warren." Female Parent

The parent group that wanted a 24 hour facility felt that there were enough factories in the county to support a facility.

"A couple of 24 hour daycares that ran 7 days a week. They wouldn't lose anything. Between MasterGuard and Krupp Gerlach next door, there are plenty of people that are going to need sitters." Parent

Participants also felt that parents working in factories in neighboring counties might be interested in the facility.

"Even people that work over in Crawfordsville, in factories over there. There are a lot of people from here [Veedersburg] and Dayton that go right through here [to get to work]," Parent

Much of the interest in a 24-hour facility stems from the need for 3rd shift care. Parents worry more if they have to leave their children with a babysitter at night.

"Because it's scary leaving your child with someone even on third shift. It's not hard to find someone because all your child is doing is sleeping. But still it is hard to trust your child is still sleeping in someone else's home, you have to worry about the bed. It's hard.", Parent

School Age Care

Along with the need for more infant care and a child care center, providers and parents also both discussed the need for more school age care in the counties. Many parents felt that more after school care was needed in the counties, particularly in Veedersburg. Their children have enjoyed after school programs in the past. Parents also expressed concern about kids coming home to an empty house.

"I have seen kids come home to nobody, 8 years old, easy to get in trouble."
Parent

"After school care is needed, Some of this was done [in the past], but it was so expensive, people couldn't do it because it was not affordable. [There are] lots of latchkey kids." Female Parent

Parents also mentioned that older children too had no place to go after school and would get into trouble.

"You see they downtown on the streets, the older kids.", Parent

Sick Care

Another need discussed by parents was sick care. Parents discussed the problems they face when their children are sick. Most have had to miss work or take vacation days. Parents were interested in adding a sick care room to the proposed child care center. This would be particularly helpful if children get sick during the day and need a place to stay for a couple hours until their parents get off work.

Special Needs Care

Providers identified care for special needs children as another unmet need in the county. According to providers, it is difficult for parents to find care for a special needs child because the costs are higher. In addition, caring for children with special needs requires more training and much patience.

Employer Education

Finally, both of the parent groups discussed the need for more employer understanding of child care issues. One parent suggested that some employer education about child care issues would be a good idea.

"Some employers are not very understanding. I think maybe some employer education as to child care. Some employers don't understand about kids being sick."

Summary

Parent and provider focus groups provided valuable information about the child care needs of Fountain and Warren Counties. Providers felt that there was not enough quality child care available in the counties. They also discussed some of their unmet needs including the need for backup care, more educational opportunities for providers, and better distribution of educational grant information. Both parents and providers discussed some of the unmet needs of the counties, including: Infant care, a child care center in Fountain County, after school care, sick care, and employer education.

Recommendations

Based on the child care focus group interviews the following recommendations could be made:

1. Providers would like the opportunity to network more with other providers. One way to do this would be to hold monthly or periodic meetings with child care providers. Make sure to encourage as many unlicensed providers as possible to attend. These meetings will help to facilitate professionalism among providers and lead to better retention of providers. They also are a good way to disseminate information on grants and opportunities available for providers. Another more simple way to develop networks among providers is to compile a telephone list of all providers in the area.
2. Find ways to increase parents knowledge of licensing. Develop a parental education brochure about the benefits of using quality child care. Include information about licensing and its requirements, and what parents should expect to pay for quality care.

3. Encourage more unlicensed providers to become licensed. This would help to improve the quality of the child care available.
4. Explore ways to increase the number of slots for infants in the counties. Provide incentives (e.g., money or equipment) to providers that are willing to take infants.
5. A licensed child care center is needed in Fountain County. The center should include infant care. Look into the possibility of operating the center 24 hours or at least during 1st and 2nd shifts. Coordination with local factories is crucial.
6. Finally, develop a plan to provide sick care in the county. The best way to start would be to explore the feasibility of providing sick care. This can be done in two different ways:
 - a.) Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room in a child care center (either at the existing Williamsport Day Center or a new center in Fountain County).
 - b.) Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room. Assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care and how much they would be willing to pay.

1999 Fountain/Warren County Step Ahead Child Care Needs Assessment: Summary of Findings

Supply and Demand for Child Care

1. The demand for child care in Fountain County is expected to remain stable or increase in the next 5 years.
2. The demand for child care in Warren County is expected to remain stable or decline in the next 5 years.
3. Both licensed home providers and community professionals overwhelmingly agree that there is a shortage of quality child care in Fountain and Warren Counties.
4. There is a limited supply of licensed child care in both Fountain and Warren Counties. There are no child care centers in Fountain County.

Types of Care Needed But Not Available

1. Lack of care for children when they are sick was the most common problem identified by parents surveyed. Currently, there is no licensed sick care in either county. Sick care is particularly a problem for Warren County families.
2. Other types of child care in Fountain and Warren County are in short supply, including: Infant/toddler, afternoon (2nd shift), and night (3rd shift) care.
3. Parents would like a 24-hour child care center in Fountain County.

Types of Child Care Preferred

1. Many Fountain and Warren County families currently use a babysitter or unlicensed child care home but would prefer to use a different form of child care.
2. Fountain County parents would prefer to use either family members for their child care, or a licensed child care home or center.
3. Warren County parents also would prefer to either care for their children at home, use relative care, or use licensed home care.

Child Care Problems and Their Impact on Families

1. Many parents are unaware of the types of child care available to them. They do not know how to locate care for their children.
2. Many Fountain and Warren County parents are forced to miss work or school due to child care problems.
3. Parents have trouble finding 2nd and 3rd shift care. Professionals identified 2nd shift care as the bigger need.

Resources for Child Care Providers

1. Child care providers would like more opportunities to network with other providers.
2. More training opportunities in the evening or on weekends are needed for child care providers.
3. Better distribution of educational and other grant opportunity materials are also needed for child care providers.

Recommendations for Action

Increase the Supply of Quality Child Care

1. Increase the number of licensed child care slots available for infants and toddlers in both Fountain and Warren Counties. Provide incentives for providers to take more infants. Incentives could include special training, equipment grants, supplements to reimbursements or fees, and regular relief/substitute care.
2. Increase the number of slots for afternoon (2nd shift) care and night (3rd shift) care in both counties. Working through existing providers and providing incentives may be the most effective way to do this.
3. Establish a child care center in Fountain County. Locate the center in Attica or Veedersburg, which are both close to both Harrison Steel and MasterGuard. Form a coalition of family friendly businesses to collaborate on this project.

4. Develop a plan to provide sick care in the county.
 - a. Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room at a new child care center (Recommendation #3). A provider network (Recommendation #7 below) may be a good place to identify providers interested in providing sick care.
 - b. Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room for children. Assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care, how much they would be willing to pay, and staffing options.
5. Encourage local school corporations to provide after school care.

Support Child Care Providers and Increase Quality

6. Continue to encourage experienced child care providers to take advantage of training opportunities and to seek licensing. Coordinate training sessions at convenient times for providers. Advertise the Council's activities and the importance of licensing to all providers.
7. Set up a monthly support group for child care providers. Encourage unlicensed providers as well as licensed providers to attend. This group would allow providers to network and also would provide a good forum to distribute grants and other training information.
8. Educate parents about the costs of quality child care and the importance of seeking quality care. Develop a public education campaign that includes information about how to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for quality child care, and the importance of seeking a licensed provider.

Support Families Needing Child Care

9. Work with local employers to educate them about the child care needs of their employees. Organize a seminar for local business representatives or a public education campaign aimed at employers to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Find a way, possibly through a newsletter, to publicly recognize businesses who take steps to implement "family-friendly" policies. Encourage employers to use the "Indiana Tool-Kit for Employers and Community Planners" developed by the Center for Families at Purdue University to assess the child care needs of their employees.

Appendices

- A. MasterGuard Daycare Survey
- B. Key Informant Interview Protocol
- C. Parent Survey Questionnaire
- D. Age Specific Data from Questionnaire
- E. Parent Focus Group Protocol
- F. Provider Focus Group Protocol

Appendix A: MasterGuard Survey Daycare survey

If there was a licensed daycare center close to MasterGuard that you could pay through Payroll deduction would you use it? (circle one)

Yes

No

Maybe

If yes or Maybe how many children would you send and list their ages.

_____ 0-1yrs _____ 1-2yrs _____ 2-3yrs _____ 3-4yrs _____ 4-5yrs _____ 5-6yrs _____ 6 & up

What shift would you send the children? (circle one)

1

2

3

A

B

C

D

Comment or suggestions

Daycare survey

If there was a licensed daycare center close to MasterGuard that you could pay through Payroll deduction would you use it? (circle one)

Yes

No

Maybe

If yes or Maybe how many children would you send and list their ages.

_____ 0-1yrs _____ 1-2yrs _____ 2-3yrs _____ 3-4yrs _____ 4-5yrs _____ 5-6yrs _____ 6 & up

What shift would you send the children? (circle one)

1

2

3

A

B

C

D

Comment or suggestions

Daycare survey

If there was a licensed daycare center close to MasterGuard that you could pay through Payroll deduction would you use it? (circle one)

Yes

No

Maybe

If yes or Maybe how many children would you send and list their ages.

_____ 0-1yrs _____ 1-2yrs _____ 2-3yrs _____ 3-4yrs _____ 4-5yrs _____ 5-6yrs _____ 6 & up

What shift would you send the children? (circle one)

1

2

3

A

B

C

D

Comment or suggestions

Appendix B: Key Informant Interview Protocol**1999 Child Care Needs Assessment****Key Informant Interview**

2/1/99

I. Introduction

Hello, my name is *(insert name here)*, and I am from Purdue University. We are working with the *(insert county name)* Step Ahead Council on a child care needs assessment for the county. The purpose of this needs assessment is to identify critical unmet child care needs and to make recommendations for ways to improve child care services within *(insert county name)*.

I am calling you to request a 20 to 25 minute phone interview to gain your informed perspective on families and child care within the county. If you agree to the interview, summaries of your main points may be used in the final needs assessment report in combination with other informants' comments. Your name would be listed in the final report as a participant, but your name will not be attributed to any statement or opinion. Names of interviewees will be included in the final report in order to show that a broad representation of experts in the county have contributed their knowledge to the needs assessment. I will take notes on our conversation, but the interview will not be tape recorded.

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

[If yes] Do you have 25 minutes for the interview now, or would another time be more convenient?

[If no] Thank you for your time and have a nice day.

II. Questions

A. Family Issues

First I am going to ask you a few questions about the families you know and the child care issues they face.

1. For the parents you are familiar with in *[Insert County name]* County, what are the most important factors they consider when making choices about child care?

[Probe to get at least 3 considerations – make sure the considerations are defined clearly by the informant]

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. Why do you think these factors are the most important to the parents?

3. What are the most common complaints you hear from parents about child care in *[insert county name]* county?

III. Provider Issues

Now I am going to ask you some general questions about child care and child care providers in *[insert county name]* County.

- A. Is there an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in *[insert county name]* County?

[If the supply is inadequate] Why is this?

[Remember to probe for root causes!]

- B. What are some of the unmet needs of *[insert County name]* County child care providers?

[If appropriate, probe with what are the reasons for these unmet needs and/or problems?] [Remember to probe for multiple needs!]

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

III. General problems in child care

Next, I am going to ask you a few questions about the overall child care needs in [xx] County. I'd like you to consider the most critical unmet child care needs in the county.

NEED 1:

What would you consider to be one of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 1]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 1]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? *[Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]*

NEED 2:

What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 2]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 2]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? *[Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]*

NEED 3:

What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 3]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 3]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? *[Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]*

NEED 4:

What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 4]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 4]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? [*Probe for more than one reason if appropriate*]

In considering the unmet child care needs you have addressed [*give brief summary of each need*], which need would you consider the top priority? Why? [*Continue to get the ranking for the remaining needs and the reasons for the ranking*]

1.

2.

3.

4.

V. Possible Solutions

We have discussed a variety of child care needs facing both parents and providers. These include ...[see loose note-taking sheet]

How do you think these needs could best be addressed?

VI. Additional information on child care in [XX] County

Is there anything else you would like to add about child care in [XX] County that we have not touched upon yet?

VII. Needs Assessment Questions

I am going to ask you a few questions that pertain directly to the needs assessment we are doing. This will be the last subject that we address.

- A. Can you suggest any reports or sources of data that would inform us about child care needs in the county?
- B. Can you suggest any other people with an informed perspective on child care in the county that we should contact for these interviews?
- C. We are planning to conduct several focus groups in [XX] County. The goal of these focus groups is to gain an in-depth understanding of the child care needs of parents within the county. Each group will be composed of 5 to 10 people, and the group discussion will last approximately 90 minutes. Can you suggest any particular groups within the county that have a unique perspective or need that would be informative to the needs assessment we are doing?

[If Yes, Would you be willing to help us contact these people and organize the focus group? What particular times and locations would be most convenient for the members of this group?]

D. Our needs assessment will also include surveying the residents of [XX] County to gain a broader perspective on child care issues and problems prevalent throughout the county.

Do you have any suggestions for getting the survey to as many parents as possible other than by mail (i.e., events, locations, etc.)?

Would you be willing to distribute surveys to the parents than you work with? [If Yes, explain that we will provide a drop box and discuss where it might be placed]

[Closing and Thanks]

Possible Solutions - Supplementary Sheet

Unmet needs facing parents

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Unmet needs facing Providers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Appendix C: Parent Survey Questionnaire

Fountain/Warren County Child Care Survey

If you are a parent or guardian of a child, please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. The Fountain/Warren County Step Ahead Council will use this information to plan better services for children and families now and in the future. This survey is completely voluntary.

1. Where do you live?

Town _____
County _____

2. Where do you travel to work?

Town _____
County _____

3. Are you the parent or guardian of a child from birth to 18 years?

- ____ YES, I have one or more children.
____ EXPECTING a child within the next year.
____ NO. (Go to question #10 on the survey.)

4. What are the ages of your children? (Write the age of each child, in years.)

5. Tell us about the child care you currently use and about the child care you would prefer to use, if possible. (Check all that apply in both columns).

I Currently Use *I Would Prefer*

_____	_____	I care for my own child at home.
_____	_____	My spouse or partner cares for my child at home.
_____	_____	My older child(ren) care(s) for my child at home.
_____	_____	My relative (grandparent, sister, mother, aunt, etc.) care(s) for my child at home.
_____	_____	My child(ren) stay(s) home alone and take care of themselves.
_____	_____	Part-time preschool or nursery school.
_____	_____	Head Start
_____	_____	Licensed family child care home
_____	_____	Licensed child care center
_____	_____	Child Care Ministry
_____	_____	Babysitter or <i>unlicensed</i> family child care provider
_____	_____	Other (Please specify)

6. How often do you need child care? (e.g., every day, 2 days/week, weekends, ...)**7. What hours do you need child care? (e.g., 9 am-5 pm, 12 noon-4 pm, ...)**

8. Which of the following problems have you experienced in the past 12 months? (*Check all that apply to you*).

- ☐ Cost is too high for the type of child care that I need. (If you check this item, please also indicate how much would you be willing to pay for child care \$_____ per child per week).
- ☐ I do not know about child care that is available to me.
- ☐ Transportation to or from child care is difficult or not available.
- ☐ Location of child care is not convenient.
- ☐ No care available during evening or night hours.
- ☐ No after-school care available.
- ☐ Child care is not available when my child is sick.
- ☐ Child care I use is not safe.
- ☐ Child care I use is low quality (e.g., doesn't offer good experiences for kids,...)
- ☐ I can't find care for my infant or toddler (i.e., birth to 3 years)
- ☐ Child care is not available for my child with special needs.
- ☐ Other problem(s). Please describe.

9. How do these child care problems affect you? (e.g., missed work hours, etc...)

10. Please indicate which of the following statements are important to you in choosing a child care provider. (*Circle your choice*).

	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
a) The provider offers many educational activities such as reading/stories, blocks, computers, etc...	A	N/O	D
b) The provider offers snacks and/or meals.	A	N/O	D
c) The number of children in the group is small enough so each receives attention.	A	N/O	D
d) The provider is close to my home or work.	A	N/O	D
e) The provider accepts children of different ages.	A	N/O	D
f) The cost is reasonable.	A	N/O	D
g) The provider has experience with children.	A	N/O	D

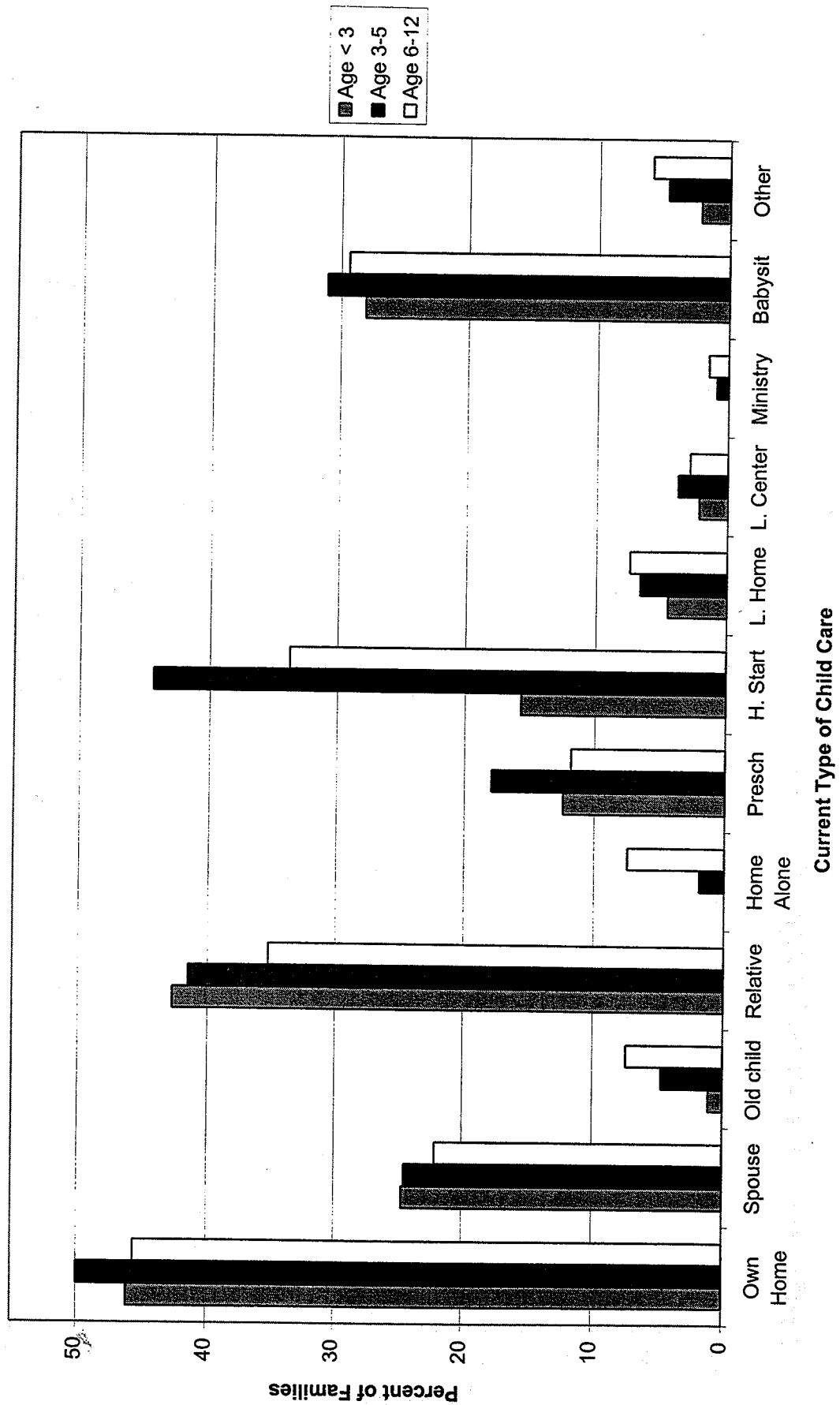
11. What do you consider quality child care?

12. What changes would you like to see in your current child care arrangements?

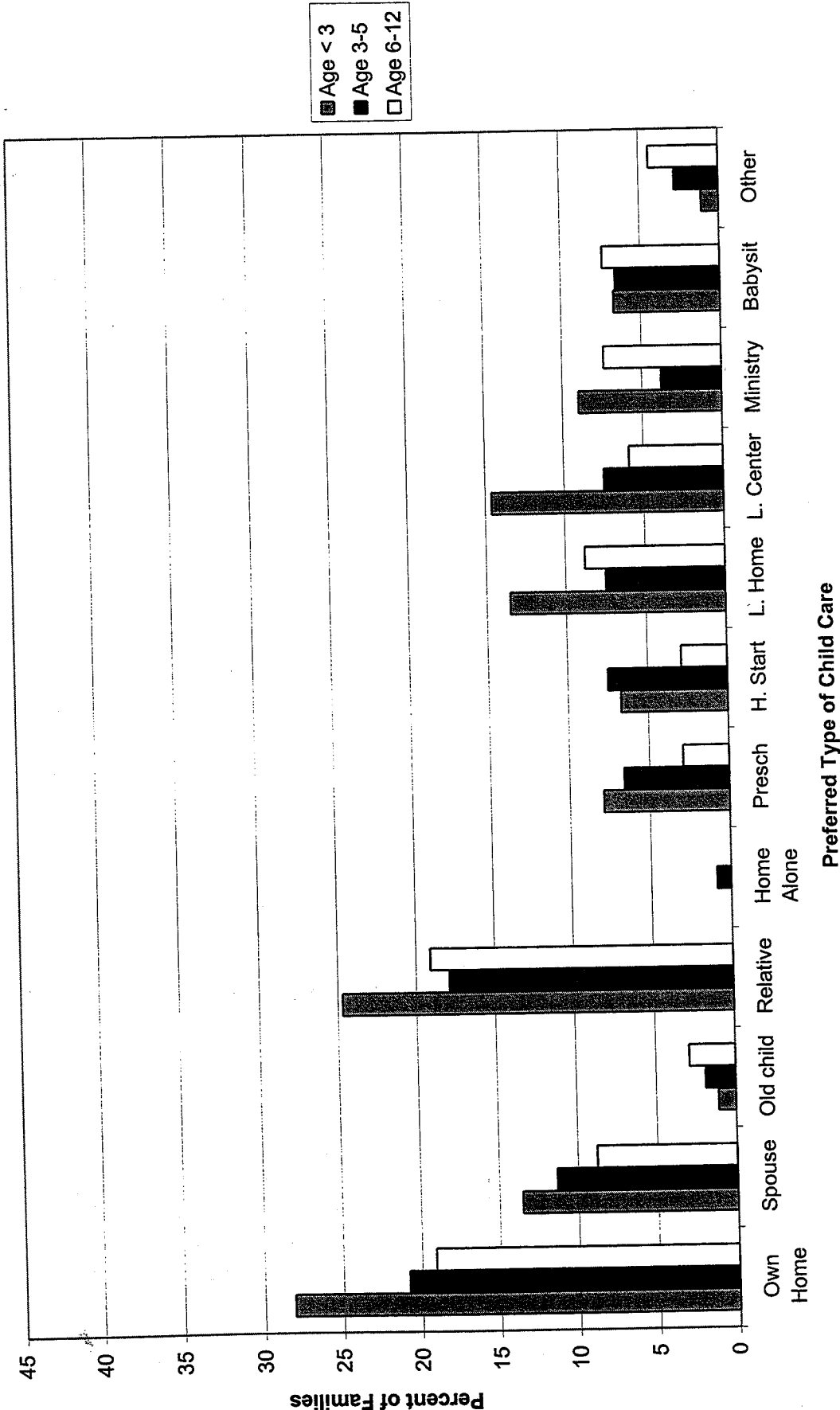
13. Have you or your spouse/partner filled out this questionnaire previously? Yes No

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with this information. Your insight is valuable and appreciated.

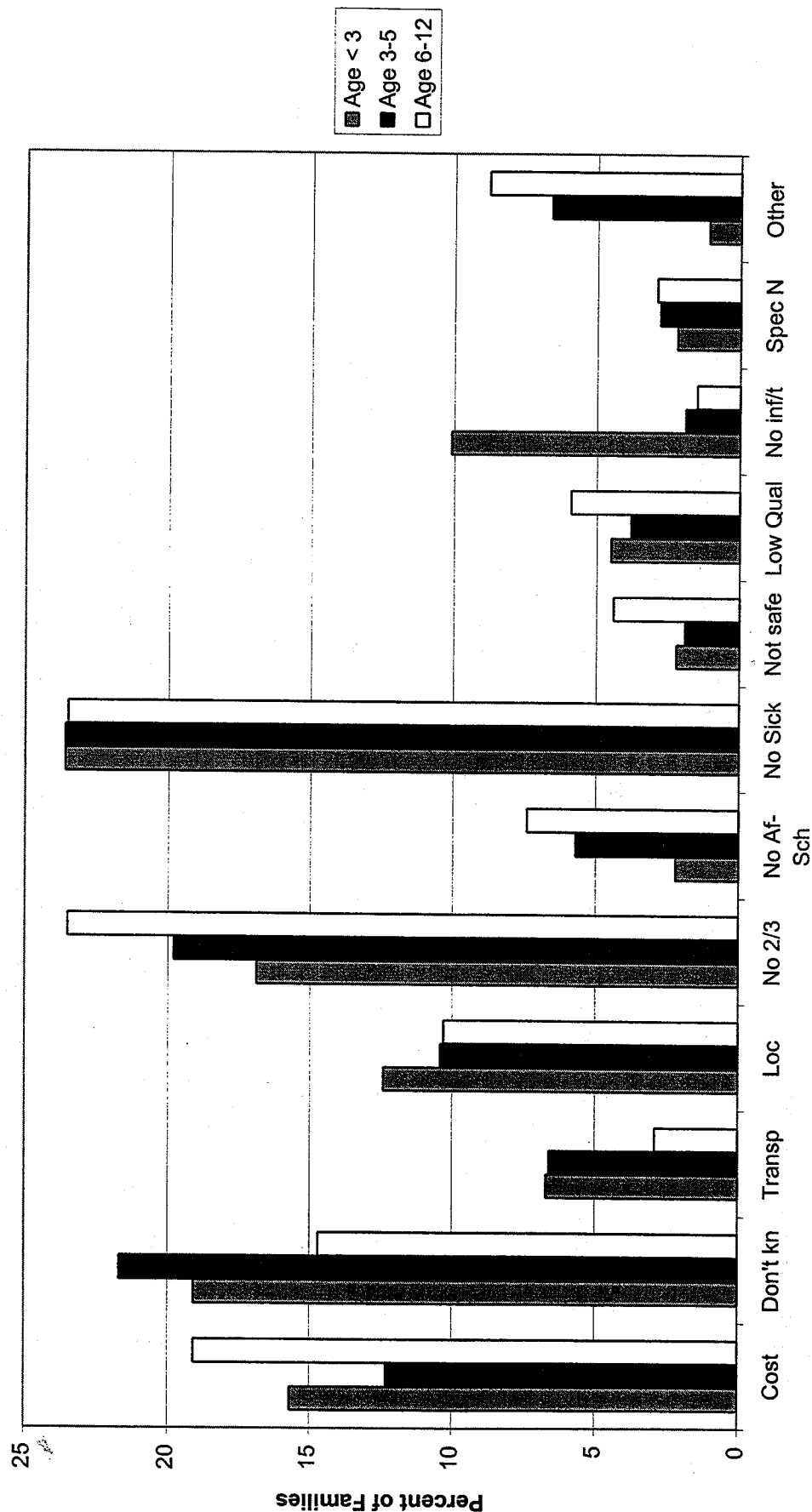
Appendix D: Current Child Care by Age of Child for All Families



Preferred Child Care by Age of Child

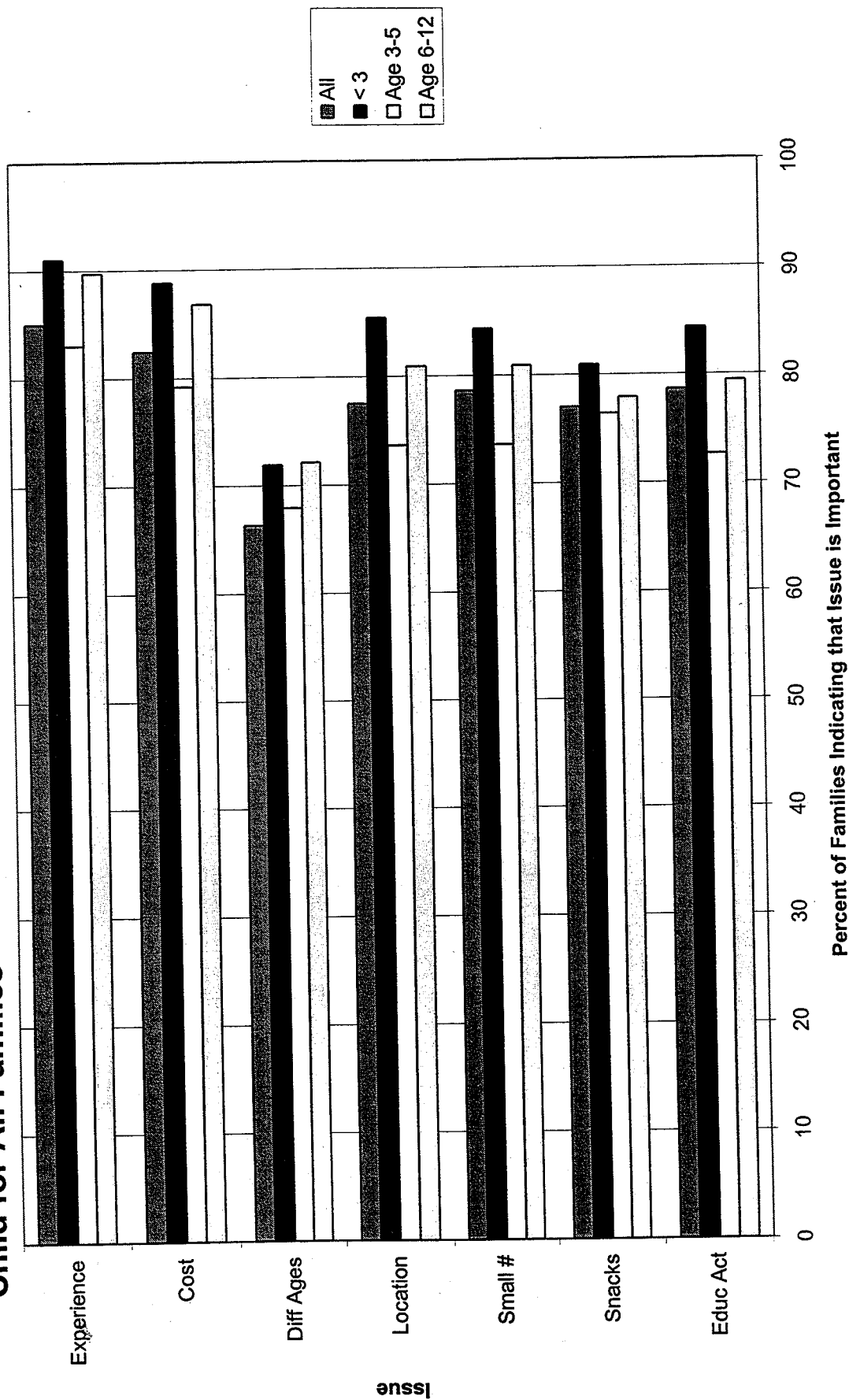


Child Care Problems Experienced by Age of Child for All Families



Child Care Problems Experienced in Last 12 Months

Important Issues When Choosing a Child Care Provider by Age of Child for All Families



Appendix E: 1999 Child Care Needs Assessment – Parent Focus Group Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for coming. As you know, our discussion will revolve around the issue of child care in Fountain and Warren Counties. My name is [insert name], and this is [insert name]. We are from Purdue University and have been asked to facilitate the discussion for the next hour.

You were each selected because you share certain things in common that are of particular interest to us, specifically, you are all [head start] parents. We are particularly interested in your views because we want to hear the thoughts and experiences of as many parents in the county as we can.

The overall purpose of this discussion is to give you each the opportunity to express your views on the current status of child care in the county and to help us become aware of any unmet needs that you are experiencing. It might be helpful if we all work for the same definition of child care. For this discussion, child care includes any way in which your child is cared for when you are at work or school.

We ask that you be as honest as possible in expressing you views. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers but rather there may be different experiences or differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. To ensure that people feel safe to share their views, we ask:

1. That people feel free to share their views while respecting other's views,
2. That only one person speak at a time,
3. That you speak up so that we can hear your experiences, and
4. That you feel free to "pass" on a subject that you do not feel comfortable discussing.

This discussion will be taped for our use in accessing the child care needs of the county in the future. No names will be directly linked to any comments made. If you will follow along on the handout, I will read to you the conditions of informed consent which ensures that you understand how our discussion will be used and what your rights are ...[read the informed consent form and collect signed forms]

Opening Question

Okay, let's begin by briefly getting to know each other. Why don't each of you tell us

1. Your name,
2. Where you live and how long you've lived there,
3. How many children you have and their ages, and
4. The types of child care you use.

Would you begin? [start with someone in the room]

Introductory Questions

Now that we know a little bit about each other, we will start our discussion. To start off, we would like you to pretend that we live in an ideal world. What kind of child care arrangements would meet your family's needs in such a world?

Is that type of care available to you now?

For those of you who answered no, how could current options be modified to fit your needs?

Key Questions

Okay, now we would like you to think a little deeper about the issues behind your needs. What are some of the problems or complaints that you have regarding your child care experiences?

How do such child care problems affect you, your children, or other family members?
[Possible probe: For instance, how is your work affected? Your personal life?, Your family relationships]

What if you lost your child care provider tomorrow. What would it be like to find a replacement?

Ending Questions

Let's spend the remainder of our time thinking about how the child care services in Fountain and Warren Counties could be changed to better meet your needs.

We would like you to imagine that you could change some things about your current child care arrangements. What would you change? How?

It seems that the key issues for you are [summarize]. Is that an adequate summary?

Considering these issues, what could be done in [insert county name here] over the next few years to solve these child care problems?

Closing

Well, our time is up. We would like to take the opportunity again to thank you for participating.

Appendix F: 1999 Child Care Needs Assessment Focus Group Protocol - Providers (6/7/99)

Introduction:

Thank you for letting us talk to you tonight. As you know, our discussion will revolve around the issue of child care in Fountain and Warren Counties.

We are particularly interested in your views because we want to hear the thoughts and experiences of as many voices as possible in the counties. We have also been conducting focus groups with parents throughout the counties.

The overall purpose of this discussion is to give you each the opportunity to express your views on the current status of child care in the county and to help us become aware of any unmet needs that you are experiencing. It might be helpful if we all work from the same definition of child care. For this discussion, child care includes any way in which children are cared for while their parents are at work or school.

We ask that you be as honest as possible in expressing your views. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers but rather there may be different experiences or differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. To ensure that people feel safe to share their views, we ask:

1. That people feel free to share their views while respecting other's views,
2. That only one person speak at a time,
3. That you speak up so that we can hear your experiences, and
4. That you feel free to "pass" on a subject that you do not feel comfortable discussing.

This discussion will be taped for our use in accessing the child care needs of the county in the future. No names will be directly linked to any comments made. If you will follow along on the handout, I will read to you the conditions of informed consent which ensures that you understand how our discussion will be used and what your rights are ...[read the informed consent form and collect signed forms]

Opening Question

Okay, let's begin by briefly getting to know each other. Why don't each of you tell us

1. Your name,
2. Where you live,
3. How long have you been a child care provider and how many children you care for.
4. What hours do you care for children?

Would you begin? [start with someone in the room]

Introductory Question

Now that we know a little bit about each other, we will start our discussion.

1. Do you feel there is an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in Fountain and Warren Counties?

Why is this?

Provider Questions:

Let's talk about some issues directly related to providers in the county.

2. What are some of the unmet needs Child care providers face in Fountain and Warren Counties?

(i.e., professionalism, payment, flexibility – Note: if there are providers from each county probe for differences between counties if any).

3. Specific Provider Issues:

- a. What kinds of calls do you get from parents? [What types of child care are parents asking for? e.g., hours/ages/cost]

- b. How often do you take new children? How do you decide?

-Do you have a waiting list?

- c. What happens when you take a vacation? get sick or have a family emergency?

- d. What kinds of operating costs do you have? (i.e., food, entertainment, equipment)
 - How do you charge parents (by day/week/per child/family)?

Ending Questions

Let's spend the remainder of our time thinking about what some of the unmet child care needs of Fountain and Warren Counties are. I'd like you to consider the most critical unmet child care needs in the county.

- 4. What would you consider to be the most critical unmet needs? (i.e., infant care)
- 5. Considering these unmet needs, what could be done in Fountain and/or Warren County over the next few years to solve these child care problems?
- 6. Finally, is there anything the Step Ahead Council could do that would be most helpful to you? (ie., education, provide grant info.)

Closing

Well, our time is up. We would like to take the opportunity again to thank you for participating.